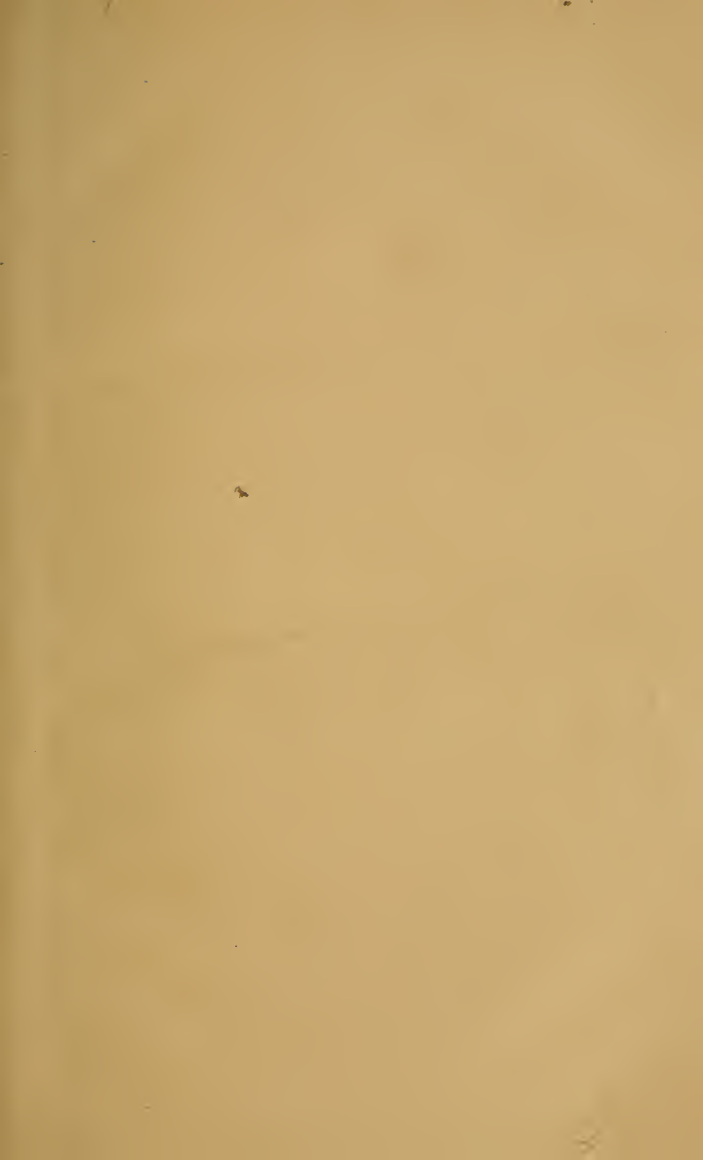




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LIVES

or

WILLIAM PINKNEY

WILLIAM ELLERY

AND

COTTON MATHER.

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Washington. Thursday night

The Bill for the Admission of  
Prisoners into the Union (without restriction  
as to Slavery) may be considered as  
lost. - That Bill was voted up this  
morning to the Senate with the restriction  
as to Slavery. - The Senate voted to amend  
it by striking out the restriction (27 to 15).

Wm. F. Kelly

L I F E  
OF  
WILLIAM PINKNEY;  
BY  
HENRY WHEATON, LL. D.



## WILLIAM PINKNEY.

---

WILLIAM PINKNEY was born at Annapolis, in the State of Maryland, on the 17th of March, 1764. His father, whom he always spoke of as a man of firm temper, and of a strong, original cast of mind, was an Englishman by birth, and took the part of the parent country during the war of the revolution. The boyish ardor or wilfulness of young Pinkney was pleased with the adoption of opposite sentiments, and he avowed, even in his early youth, his ardent attachment to the liberties of America. One of the freaks of his patriotism was to escape from the vigilance of his parents, and mount night guard with the soldiers in the fort at Annapolis. He retained to the end of his life a strong partiality to his native town, and took a pleasure in pointing out to his intimate friends, especially the young, the scenes of his childish toils and sports.

His early education was imperfect ; but this was probably less owing to the narrow circumstances of his father, who spared no pains for his

son, than to the distracted state of the country at that period. He was initiated in classical studies by a private teacher of the name of Brathand, who left the country on account of the disturbances then commencing. The affection, which his pupil always continued to entertain for him, was warmly reciprocated by the preceptor, who, after the lapse of several years, expressed the greatest pleasure in meeting in England a friend of Pinkney, and was eager in his inquiries about him. "One of my greatest regrets," said he, "in leaving America, was that I had to part from my promising pupil."

They, who remember him at this period of life, describe him as already animated by that haughty impatience of a superior, which characterized him at a later day, and which was, in some degree, the strength and the weakness of his character. This temper was not confined to the rivalries of study, but extended to the rougher competitions of boyhood. One anecdote of the former he used to relate of himself, as a *ruse*, which might be pardoned in a youth. There was a debating club at Annapolis, of which Pinkney was a member. A question had been assigned for discussion on a certain evening, when all the polite company of the town was expected to attend; and our young orator repaired to a secluded spot in the vicinity, to prepare himself in solitude for the



coming contest. His antagonist in the debate, who was ever his chief competitor in the club, was there, however, before him; and our aspirant took the benefit of some friendly screen to overhear his preparatory declamation unobserved. "The result," said he, "was brilliant. In the evening, my antagonist's speech, which was well enough seasoned with rhetoric, was received with acclamation. But when I came to make my *extemporaneous* reply, which I had very earnestly prepared during the day, I was at home, as you may guess, on every point. The night was mine, and thenceforth I was King of the Club."

He had commenced the study of medicine under Dr. Goodwin, then an extensive practitioner in Baltimore; but soon found that he had mistaken his vocation, and resorted to that of the law, under the direction of Samuel Chase, afterwards one of the Judges of the Supreme Federal Court, and then at the head of the Maryland bar. Mr. Chase happened to be present at a meeting of another debating society, of which young Pinkney was a member. Struck with the talents displayed by him on this occasion, that gentlemen advised him to the study of the law, inviting him back to Annapolis, where the Superior Courts were held, and offering him the free use of his library, and whatever other aid he could afford him. The province of Maryland was distinguished among the other

colonies by a succession of learned and accomplished lawyers; and Burke has observed, in his speech on Conciliation with America, how popular and widely diffused were law studies in all of them, especially after the publication of the classical Commentaries of Blackstone, of which nearly as many copies were sold in this country as in England. With such a guide, and in such a school, his studies were of no superficial kind.

He commenced his law studies in 1783, and was called to the bar in 1786. His very first efforts seem to have given him a commanding place in the eye of the profession and the public. A knowledge of the law of real property, and of the science of special pleading, were then considered as the two great foundations of legal distinction. His attainments in these branches were accurate and profound, and he had disciplined his mind by the cultivation of that species of logic, which contributes essentially to invigorate the reasoning faculty, and enables it to detect those fallacies, which are apt to impose upon the understanding in the warmth and hurry of forensic discussion. His style in speaking was, at that period, marked by an easy flow of natural eloquence and a happy choice of language. His voice was melodious, and seemed a most winning accompaniment to his pure and effective diction. His elocution was calm and placid; the very contrast of that strenu

ous, vehement, and emphatic manner which he subsequently adopted.

Mr. Pinkney was elected, in 1788, a delegate from the county of Harford to the Convention of the State of Maryland, which ratified the Constitution of the United States proposed by the General Convention at Philadelphia. In the same year, he was chosen to represent the county in the House of Delegates at Annapolis, which seat he continued to fill until the year 1792.

In 1789, he was married at Havre de Grace to Miss Ann Maria Rodgers, daughter of Mr. John Rodgers of that town, and sister to that distinguished officer Commodore Rodgers, now President of the Navy Board.

In 1790, he was elected a member of Congress. His election was contested upon the ground that he did not reside in the district for which he was chosen, as required by the law of the State. But he was declared duly elected, and returned accordingly, by the Executive Council, upon the principle that the State legislature had no authority to require other qualifications than those enumerated in the federal constitution; and that the power of regulating the times, places, and manner of holding the elections, did not include that of superinducing the additional qualification of residence within the district for which the candidate was chosen. He made on this occasion a

cogent argument in support of his own claim to be returned, but declined, on account of his professional pursuits and the state of his private affairs, to accept the honor which had been conferred upon him.

At the first session of the legislature of Maryland, after his election as a member of the House of Delegates in 1788, he made a speech upon the Report of a Committee appointed to consider the laws of that State prohibiting the emancipation of slaves by last will and testament, or in any other manner during the last sickness of the owner. This speech breathes all the fire of youth, and a generous enthusiasm for the rights of human nature, although it may not perhaps be thought to give any pledge of those great powers of eloquence and reasoning, which he afterwards displayed in his mature efforts. At the subsequent session in 1789, he delivered a speech on the same subject, which, as he himself said in a letter to a friend, written at the time when his consistency was impeached for the part he took in the Missouri question, is "much better than the first speech and for a young man is well enough."

Neither of these juvenile orations, however, grapples with the real difficulties of the subject, or tends to solve the problem, how the entire emancipation of the African race, in a country where it is predominant in point of numbers, can be recon-

ciled with the safety of the white population ; or how it is to find its equal place in a society, where inveterate prejudices, founded on indelible physical distinctions, (it is to be apprehended) must ever retain it in the abject condition of a despised and oppressed caste. The more mature and ripened judgment of Mr. Pinkney, as a statesman, seems to have ultimately settled down into the conviction that colonization was the only practicable remedy, from which the removal of this plague-spot could even be hoped for ; and we shall hereafter see, that his opinions on the subject of slavery underwent so great a modification as to incur the reproach of inconsistency on a subject, which, as a constitutional lawyer, he regarded as exclusively of local State cognizance, with which the federal authority had no right to intermeddle, not even to the extent of annexing the local prohibition of slavery as a condition to the admission of new States into the Union.

In 1792, Mr. Pinkney was elected a member of the Executive Council of Maryland, and continued in that station until November, 1795, when, being again chosen a delegate to the State legislature, he resigned his seat at the Council-board, of which he was at that time President.

During all this period he continued indefatigably devoted to his professional pursuits, and gradually rose to the head of the bar, and to a

distinguished rank in the public councils of his native State. His acuteness, dexterity, and zeal in the transaction of business; the extent and accuracy of his legal learning; his readiness, spirit, and vigor in debate; the beauty and richness of his fluent elocution; the manliness of his figure, and the energy of his mien, united with a sonorous and flexible voice, an animated and graceful delivery, are said to have been the qualities by which he attained this elevated standing in the public estimation. But there remain no other memorials of his professional character at this period of his life, than such as have been preserved in the fleeting recollections of his cotemporaries; in the written opinions which he gave upon cases submitted to him as counsel, and which often embraced elaborate arguments upon the most difficult questions of law; and in the printed Reports of the Court of Appeals. It is, however, obviously impossible to form any adequate notion of the powers of an advocate from these papers, or from the necessarily concise sketches of the arguments of counsel contained in the books of Reports. But an argument which he made before the Court of Appeals in 1793, upon the question whether the statute of limitations is a bar to the issue of tenant in tail, may be referred to as a specimen of the accuracy and depth of his legal learning, and of



his style and peculiarly cogent manner of reasoning upon legal subjects.\*

In 1796, he was selected by President Washington as one of the commissioners on the part of the United States under the seventh article of Mr. Jay's treaty with Great Britain. After consulting with his friends, he determined to accept this appointment, which had been spontaneously tendered to him. He accordingly embarked for London with his family, where he arrived in July, 1796, and was joined by Mr. Gore, the other commissioner on the part of our government. The Board, having been organized by the addition of two English civilians, Sir John Wichell and Dr. Swabey, and of Mr. Trumbull, a citizen of the United States appointed by lot, proceeded to examine the claims brought before it. Various interesting questions of public law arose, in the course of this examination, respecting contraband of war, domicile, blockade, and the practice of the prize courts, which were investigated with great learning and ability by the commissioners. Mr. Pinkney's written opinions, read at the Board, are finished models of judicial eloquence, uniting powerful and comprehensive reasoning with profound knowledge of international law, and a copious, pure, and energetic diction. The theory of the

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\* Harris and M'Henry's Reports, Vol. III. p. 270.

conclusiveness of the judgments of Admiralty courts, with the appropriate limitations of its application, has, I think, nowhere been more profoundly and satisfactorily discussed, than in the opinion delivered by him in the case of *The Betsey*, in contradiction to that of Sir John Wichell, who maintained, that compensation for the capture ought not to be allowed in that case by the commissioners, because, the sentence of condemnation pronounced in the inferior court having been affirmed by the Lords of Appeal in Prize Causes, conclusive credit ought to be given to it, inasmuch as, according to the general law of nations, it must be presumed that justice had been administered by the competent tribunal of the capturing state; and the treaty had not varied this general rule of international law, having engaged to afford relief only in cases, (either existing at the time of its signature or before the ratification,) in which, from peculiar circumstances belonging to them, adequate compensation could not then be obtained in the ordinary course of justice.

Mr. Pinkney was also engaged, during his residence abroad, in attending to the claim of the State of Maryland for a large amount of public property, invested in the stock of the Bank of England before the revolution, which had become the subject of a complicated Chancery litigation. He at last succeeded in extricating



the stock from this situation by an arrangement, under which it was, with his consent, adjudged to the crown, with an understanding, that, after the payment of the liens upon it, the balance should be paid over to the government of Maryland.

His residence in England was protracted far beyond his expectations or wishes, as he was anxious to return to his native country and his profession. This anxiety was feelingly expressed in his epistolary correspondence with his private friends. In a letter, dated August, 1800, to his brother, he says; "It is time for me to think seriously of revisiting my country, and of reviving my professional habits. I shall soon begin to require ease and retirement; my constitution is weak, and my health precarious. A few years of professional labor will bring me into *the sear and yellow leaf* of life; and if I do not begin speedily, I shall begin too late. To commence the world *at forty* is indeed dreadful; but I am used to adverse fortune, and know how to struggle with it; my consolations cannot easily desert me,—the consciousness of honorable views, and the cheering hope that Providence will yet enable me to pass the evening of my days in peace. It is not of small importance to me, that I shall go back to the bar cured of every propensity that could divert me from business, stronger than when I left it, and, I trust, somewhat wiser. In regard

to legal knowledge, I shall not be worse than if I had continued in practice ; I have been a regular and industrious student for the last two years and I believe myself to be a much better lawyer than when I arrived in England. But I shall not grow much wiser or better by a longer stay. I am become familiar with almost every thing around me, and do not look out upon life with as much intensesness of observation as heretofore ; and of course, I am now rather confirming former acquisitions of knowledge than laying in new stores for the future. I begin to languish for active employment. The commission does not occupy me sufficiently, and visiting, &c., with much reading, cannot supply the deficiency. My time is always filled in one way or other, but I think I should be the better for a *speech* now and then. Perhaps another twelve months may give me an opportunity of making *speeches* till I get tired of them, and tire others too."

In another letter written in August, 1803, to his friend, Mr. Cooke, he expresses the same sentiments, with his apprehensions that what has been by some since called the "civil revolution," which brought Mr. Jefferson into power at the head of the democratic party, might sever the ties of friendship which had connected him with several leading individuals of the opposition. "I am prepared," he says, "on my return, to find the

spirit of party as high and phrensied as the most turbulent would have it. I am even prepared to find a brutality in that spirit, which in this country either does not exist, or is kept down by the predominance of a better feeling. I lament with you that it is so ; and *I wonder* that it is so ; for the American people are generous, and liberal, and enlightened. We are not, I hope, to have this inordinate zeal, this extravagant fanaticism, entailed upon us ; although one might almost suppose it to be a part of our political creed, that internal tranquillity, or rather the absence of domestic discord and a rancorous contention for power, was incompatible with the health of the state and the liberty of the citizen. I profess to be temperate in my opinions, and shall put in my claim to freedom of conscience ; but, when both sides are intolerant, what hopes can I have that this claim will be respected ? I do not desire *office* ; although I have no such objections to the present administration, as, on what are called, party principles, would induce me to decline public employment. It is my wish to be a mere professional laborer, to cultivate my friends and my family, and to secure an honorable independence before I am overtaken by age and infirmity. My present intention is to fix in Baltimore, where I will flatter myself I shall find some, who will not regret my choice of residence."

On his return to the United States in August, 1804, Mr Pinkney executed his purpose of removing to Baltimore, and began to attend the federal Supreme Court at Washington. He continued to devote himself with unwearied assiduity to his professional pursuits. During his long residence in England, he had never laid aside his habits of diligent study, and had availed himself of his opportunities of intercourse with the accomplished lawyers of that country, and of frequenting the courts of Westminster Hall, to enlarge and improve his legal attainments. He was, by his public station, brought into immediate contact with most of the English civilians, and was much in the society of that accomplished and highly gifted man, Sir William Scott. He had occasion to witness the forensic efforts of Erskine, then in the meridian of his fame. He was in the constant habit of attending the debates in the two houses of Parliament, whilst Fox and Pitt still shone forth as the brightest luminaries of British eloquence. A higher standard of literary attainments was held up to his observation. He employed his leisure hours in endeavoring to supply what he now found to be the defect of his early education, by completing his knowledge of English and classical literature. He devoted peculiar attention to the subject of Latin prosody and English elocution ; aiming, above all, to acquire a

critical knowledge of the living English tongue, its pronunciation, its terms and significations, its synonymes, and, in short, its whole structure and vocabulary. By these means, he added to his natural eloquence and fluency a copiousness and variety of diction, which graced even his colloquial intercourse, and imparted new strength and beauty to his forensic style.

In April, 1806, he was again called into the public service of his country abroad by circumstances, which were even then deemed to be of serious concern, but which ultimately involved our republic in that war with Great Britain, which has given a new coloring and character to our subsequent political existence.

In the course of the ensuing year after his return from England, several cases of the capture of our merchant vessels, engaged in carrying the produce of the colonies of the enemies of Great Britain to Europe, had occurred, which threatened the total destruction of that branch of our neutral carrying trade. These seizures were grounded upon a revival by the British government of a doctrine, which had acquired the denomination of "the Rule of the War of 1756," from the circumstance of its having been first applied by the Prize Court during that war. The rule was suffered to lie dormant during the war of our revolution, probably from the fear of exciting the

hostility of the maritime powers who subsequently formed the league of armed neutrality. It was revived during the first war of the French revolution in 1793, and extended to the entire prohibition of all neutral traffic with the colonies and upon the coasts of the enemy. But, as indemnity was given by the board of commissioners under Mr. Jay's treaty for captures made upon this pretext, and as it had been expressly admitted in Lord Hawksbury's letter to Mr. King of April 11th, 1801, (enclosing Sir John Nicholl's official report as Advocate-General,) that the colonial trade might be carried on by neutrals circuitously, and that landing the cargo in a neutral port broke the continuity of voyage so as to legalize the trade thus carried on, there was the more reason for surprise and complaint on the part of the government and people of this country at this sudden and unexpected attack upon their accustomed trade.

The revival and extended application of "the Rule of 1756" gave rise to numerous polemic publications on both sides of the Atlantic; in which the respective pretensions of England and America were elaborately discussed. Among these was an ingenious pamphlet entitled "War in Disguise, or the Frauds of Neutral Flags," written by Mr. Stephen, an English barrister, well known for his enthusiastic zeal in the cause of the abolition of



West India slavery, and who was supposed to enjoy the confidence of the ministry then in power. This production was examined, and its reasonings combated, by a very able writer in the *Edinburgh Review*.\* It was also answered by Gouverneur Morris, in a pamphlet characteristic of that statesman's peculiar genius and political prejudices; and the whole subject was afterwards thoroughly discussed by Mr. Madison, then Secretary of State, in an elaborate work entitled "An Examination of the British Doctrine, which subjects to Capture a Neutral Trade not open in Time of Peace."

Different memorials were presented from the various commercial cities of the Union, remonstrating against this dangerous pretension, and pledging the support of the trading interests to such measures, as the government might think fit to adopt, to resist it, as incompatible with the just rights and independence of the country. Among these, was an argumentative and eloquent Memorial from the merchants of Baltimore, drawn up by Mr. Pinkney, who had found occasion to study this question when a member of the board of commissioners under the British treaty of 1794.

In this paper he conclusively shows, by an elaborate historical deduction, accompanied with a searching analysis of judicial precedents, that the

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\* Vol. VIII. No. 15, for April, 1806.

doctrine in question was never heard of until the war of 1756; that it was then rested upon the peculiar ground of *adoption* or naturalization, by which neutral vessels, engaged in the colony trade of France, were considered by the British courts of Admiralty as having forfeited their original national character, by being incorporated into the enemy's navigation with all its privileges, just as an individual neutral merchant is considered as losing the immunities of his native character by permanent residence in the belligerent country. He also proves, that during the war of the American revolution, the doctrine was expressly disavowed by the British prize tribunals, and that this solemn renunciation was powerfully confirmed by the acquiescence of Great Britain, during the first and most important and active period of the war which was terminated by the peace of Amiens, in the free and unlimited prosecution by neutrals of the whole colony trade of France; and, when she did, at last, interrupt it by orders of council, secretly issued and suddenly executed, she made ample amends for this breach of good faith and public law, into which she had been inconsiderately betrayed.

The leading part taken in this interesting discussion by Mr. Pinkney, and the thorough knowledge of the subject shown in this paper, together with the valuable experience he had acquired



during his former residence in England, induced President Jefferson to invite him to assist in the negotiation already commenced by Mr. Monroe, then our resident envoy in London, on this and the other important points of difference between the two countries. With this view, he was appointed in April, 1806, jointly with Mr. Monroe as minister plenipotentiary to treat with the British government on these subjects. He, therefore, once more abandoned his professional pursuits, and embarked in the month of May, with his family, for England.

The moment *seemed* to be propitious for a satisfactory adjustment of the complicated difficulties which had arisen between the two countries. Mr. Fox, after having been banished from the royal presence and confidence for more than twenty years, subsequent to the failure of his famous India bill, was once more admitted to a share of power in conjunction with that portion of Mr. Pitt's party who continued to adhere to Lord Grenville after the death of their great leader. Mr. Fox was appointed to the Foreign Office, and one of his first objects was an endeavor to realize his own views of the impolicy of the war with France, which he had so long and so strenuously opposed, by opening a negotiation for peace. But this effort at negotiation, wedged in between the battle of Austerlitz and that of

Jena, the former of which broke the heart of Pitt, and the latter laid the European continent prostrate at the feet of Napoleon, came too late to stop the resistless tide of conquest which threatened to overwhelm the world.

This awful state of things rendered it the more incumbent on the new ministry to prevent the weight of America, with her vast maritime resources, from being thrown into the scale of France, by doing us justice upon those subjects of complaint which had occasioned so much irritation, the lawless practice of impressing our sea-faring citizens from on board our own vessels on the high seas, the habitual violation of our neutral jurisdiction on the coasts and within the bays, ports, and harbors of the Union, and the multiplied restraints upon our commerce by novel interpretations of public law.

The Lords Holland and Auckland were named by the government to treat on these points, and for a revision of the commercial articles of Mr Jay's treaty with the American envoys. The writer of this biographical sketch has been assured by Mr Monroe, that the British commission, during the whole course of this difficult and delicate negotiation, showed the most candid and conciliatory disposition, at the same time that they were, of course, duly attentive to the interests of their own country. That amiable, enlightened, and

accomplished nobleman, Lord Holland, it is well known to all who have attended to his public career, or enjoyed the advantage of personal intercourse with him, then cherished and still cherishes for the United States and its free institutions those feelings of kindness, which he imbibed from his illustrious relative, Mr. Fox, and which we may be allowed to believe have been confirmed by his own enlightened judgment. Lord Auckland seemed also desirous, by a conciliatory deportment, to remove any injurious impressions which might have been taken up against him during the war of our revolution, but without adverting, on any occasion, to the transactions of those times.

The British negotiators were, however, in the hands of their government, whose orders they implicitly obeyed ; and it is well known that the cabinet itself was made up of a coalition of fragile and discordant materials, all its proceedings being looked upon with extreme jealousy by the opposition of the day. It fell to pieces not long after the death of Mr. Fox, who soon followed his illustrious rival to the grave ; and Mr. Canning came into the Foreign Office, deeply imbued with all those prejudices against every thing American, which he had imbibed in the school of that minister under whose banner he so long served. Mr. Canning acquired his character for liberality

as a statesman long afterwards ; towards America at least, he was, at this period, neither generous nor just.

Previous to this breaking up of the coalition ministry, (which at last took place upon the obstinate refusal of the king to consent to any measure of Catholic emancipation, however limited, and his requiring a positive pledge from his ministers that they would never mention the subject to him again,) a treaty had been signed on the 31st of December, 1806, by the American, with the British negotiators, which the former, however, declared to be not conformable to their instructions, and concluded merely *sub spe rati* ; whilst the latter accompanied its signature with a declaration of the right of the British government to retaliate upon neutral nations the decree of blockade issued by Napoleon at Berlin on the 21st of November.

The ministry, no longer guided by the pacific spirit of Fox, and as if they were determined to furnish their successors with a precedent for annihilating neutral commerce, (as they had furnished to Napoleon a pretext for his Berlin decree by their previous blockade, of May, 1806, of the coasts from the Elbe to Brest,) immediately followed this declaration with the orders in council of the 7th of January, 1807, establishing a limited blockade of the whole coast of Europe in pos-

session of France and her allies, so as to prevent neutrals from trading from one port to another. Then came the attack on the frigate Chesapeake, and President Jefferson sent back the proposed treaty for revision, without submitting it to the Senate.

Mr. Monroe now returned to the United States, leaving Mr. Pinkney as sole minister in England. The prospect of reconciliation with that country, on terms consistent with the interests and honor of the republic, dark as it was before, was now clouded with the additional measure of the orders in council of November, 1807, prohibiting all neutral trade with the ports of France and her allies, or of any other country at war with Great Britain, and with all other European ports from which the British flag was excluded, unless such trade should be carried on through her ports, under her licenses, and paying duties to her exchequer.

The remnant of neutral commerce spared by this edict was effectually destroyed by the retaliatory decree soon afterwards fulminated at Milan by Napoleon, who seized gladly upon this pretext to complete his system of blockade and confiscation, by which he hoped effectually to cut off the commercial and financial resources of England. The two great belligerent powers thus mutually rivalled each other in the work of destroying the

commerce of the only remaining neutral state their indiscriminate violence had left out of the circle of hostility. In vain were the justice and policy of the British orders in council of November arraigned in Parliament by Lord Erskine and other members of the late ministry, who had themselves furnished the precedent and the pattern of that measure in the orders issued in the preceding January on the same pretext of retaliating the Berlin decree. In vain was the wanton attack on Copenhagen assailed by them as subversive of the sacred principles of morality, of public law, and of the soundest maxims of national policy. All other considerations were merged in the apparent necessity of resisting the portentous power of the French Emperor, who, after the victory of Friedland and the peace of Tilsit, wielded the entire resources of the European continent, and directed them to the avowed purpose of subverting the British empire.

The solicitude of Mr. Pinkney to accomplish the intentions of his government in seeking to remove by pacific means those obstacles, which had been thrown in the way of neutral commerce by these violent measures, and his anxiety to vindicate the honor and rights of his country, are apparent, not only from his official correspondence, but from his voluminous private letters to Mr



Madison, to transcribe which would enlarge the size of this biography beyond its prescribed limits.

But the years 1808, 1809, and 1810, passed away without any adequate return for his zealous and persevering coöperation with the government at home, in endeavoring to avoid that alternative which was at last forced upon us by the obstinate perseverance of the British ministry in their offensive measures. The arrangement concluded at Washington, in April, 1809, for the repeal of the orders in council, upon condition that our non-intercourse should be continued against France until she repealed her decrees, was disavowed by the British government. Fresh cause of irritation was created by the offensive conduct of Mr. Jackson, sent to explain that disavowal; the attack on the frigate Chesapeake still remained unexpiated; the impressment of our seamen and the capture of our vessels were still continued.

His conciliatory endeavors to remove these causes of complaint proved abortive; whilst he was subjected to severe censure at home for the alleged tameness of his remonstrances, which were in exact conformity to the instructions he had received from our government, whose excessive anxiety for peace dictated only the most amicable language in its intercourse with England. In the mean time, the money he had saved from his professional earnings had been absorbed in the

expenses incident to the education of his children in a foreign country, and to maintaining that style of living, which is not only absolutely necessary in a public minister, in order to enable him to reciprocate the civilities of others which he in vain seeks to avoid, but even to perform the duties of his station by keeping up social intercourse with his diplomatic colleagues, and with the members of the government to which he is accredited.

In his letters to his private friends, the effects of these cares upon his health and spirits are expressed with much sensibility, mingled with the strongest feelings of attachment to the scenes and companions of his youth. In a private letter to President Madison, dated in November, 1810, he requests his immediate recall, upon the ground that his salary was utterly inadequate to defray his unavoidable expenses. He adds; "There are other considerations, however, which *ought*, perhaps, to have produced the same effect at even an earlier period, and *would* have produced it, if I had followed my own inclinations rather than a sense of duty to you and to the people. Some of these considerations respect myself individually, and need not be named; for they are nothing in comparison with those which look to my family. Its claims to the benefit of my professional exertions have been too long neglected. Age is stealing fast upon me; and I shall soon have lost



the power of retrieving the time which has been wasted in endeavors (fruitless it would seem) to deserve well of my country. Every day will, as it passes, render it more difficult to resume the habits which I have twice improvidently abandoned. At present, I feel no want of cheerful resolution to seek them again as old friends, whom I ought never to have quitted, and no want of confidence that they will not disown me. How long that resolution, if not acted upon, may last, or that confidence may stand up in the decline of life, I cannot know, and will not try. I trust it is not necessary for me to say how much your kindness, and that of your predecessor, has contributed to subdue the anxieties of my situation, and to make me forget that I ought to leave a post, at once so perilous and costly, to richer and to abler hands. Those who know me will believe, that my heart is deeply sensible of that kindness, and that my memory will preserve a faithful record of it while it can preserve a trace of any thing."

Mr. Pinkney still continued to press upon the ministry, of which Marquis Wellesley was the head, the complaints of this country, until, finding that no attention was likely to be paid to his remonstrances, he took leave of the British court in February, 1811, soon afterwards embarked in the frigate *Essex* for the United States, and arrived at Annapolis in the month of June.

On his return, he immediately resumed the labors of his profession with his accustomed alacrity and ardor. In December, 1811, he was appointed Attorney-General of the United States by President Madison. At the term of the Supreme Court following his appointment, came on for hearing before that tribunal a cause of remarkable interest, as involving an important question of public law, our international relations with foreign powers, and the sovereign rights of a foreign nation brought in conflict with the claim of one of our own citizens.

This was the case of the ship *Exchange*, originally a merchant vessel belonging to an American citizen, which had been seized and confiscated by Napoleon, under his decree issued at Rambouillet upon the pretext of retaliating our Non-Intercourse act against France, armed and commissioned in his service, and sent to carry despatches to the East Indies. In the course of its voyage, the vessel was compelled, by stress of weather, to put into the port of Philadelphia, our waters being then open to the ships of war of all the belligerent powers. It was there proceeded against by the original American owners, who reclaimed their property in the ordinary course of justice, and the cause was finally brought, by appeal, before the Supreme Court; the French minister at Washington having insisted, in his correspondence with

our government, that the justice and legality of the original seizure under the Rambouillet decree was a question of state to be settled by diplomatic negotiation between the French and American governments ; and that it could not be determined by the ordinary tribunals of justice, especially as the vessel, sailing under the commission of his sovereign, had entered a port of the Union under the general permission to the public armed ships of foreign nations.

The same principle of exemption from ordinary judicial cognizance, for the vessel thus entering our waters, was also maintained by Mr. Pinkney, as Attorney-General, with an extent of learning, and a force of argument and eloquence, which raised him at once in the public estimation, to the head of the American bar. He reasoned to show, that, where wrongs are inflicted by one nation upon another in such tempestuous and lawless times, they could not be redressed by judicature in the exercise of its ordinary powers ; that, where the private property of the citizen had been ever so unjustly confiscated in the competent tribunals of a foreign state, a regular condemnation closes the judicial eye upon the enormity of the original seizure ; and still less could the courts of justice interfere where the sovereign rights of a foreign prince had intervened, whose flag and commission must be respected by those courts until a jurisdic-

tion over his vessels had been expressly conferred upon them by the supreme legislative power of their own government.

He compared the case then in judgment to the analogous exemptions, laid down by the classical text writers on international law, from the local jurisdiction of the country, of the person of the sovereign, of his envoys, or his fleets and armies, coming within the territorial limits of another state, by its permission, expressed or implied. He insisted upon the equality of sovereigns, and that one sovereign could not submit his rights to the decision of another, or of his courts of justice; but that the mutually conflicting claims of independent states must be adjusted by diplomatic negotiations or reprisals and war; that no reprisals had been authorized by our own government in the present instance; and that the general provisions of the laws of Congress, descriptive of the ordinary jurisdiction of the national tribunals to redress private wrongs, ought not to be so interpreted as to give them cognizance of a case, in which the sovereign power of the nation had, by implication, consented to wave its territorial jurisdiction.

These topics of argument he amplified and illustrated by a variety of considerations, drawn from the impotency of the judicial power to enforce its decisions in such cases; from the exclu-

sive competence of the supreme sovereign power of the nation adequately to avenge wrongs committed by a foreign sovereign, and to determine when it shall assert, and when it may prudently compromise, its extreme rights ; and from the very nature of the questions growing out of such transactions, as being rather questions of state policy than of jurisprudence, of diplomatic than of forensic discussion, and to be determined by all those delicate and complicated motives which guide the statesman, rather than by those inflexible rules which must be observed by those who preside in the judgment-seat. These topics were made the grounds of the masterly judgment pronounced by Mr. Chief Justice Marshall in this celebrated case, with the unanimous concurrence of the bench ; — Judge Washington uniting with the rest of his brethren in reversing his own sentence pronounced in the Circuit Court, with that perfect candor and willing sacrifice of selfish vanity to the convictions of his better-instructed mind, which adorned the character of that upright magistrate, and shed a new lustre upon the great name he bore.

The organization of the judicial policy is one of the most curious and nicely adapted parts of our admirable scheme of federative government. The highest appellate tribunal is invested with an imposing combination of authorities. Besides its

extensive powers as an ordinary court of justice, it administers the law of nations to our own citizens and to foreigners; and determines, in the last resort, every question capable of a judicial determination, arising under our municipal constitution, —including controversies between the members of the Union, and those growing out of conflicts between the fundamental law and ordinary acts of legislation. It is before “this more than Amphictyonic council” that the American lawyer is called to plead, not merely for the private rights of his fellow-citizens, but for their constitutional privileges, and to discuss the conflicting pretensions of State and Federal sovereignties.

It was a rash assertion of an illustrious writer, that there are no discoveries to be made in moral science and in the principles of government. To say nothing of other improvements which the present age has witnessed, mankind is indebted to America for the discovery and practical application of a scheme of federative representative government, which, if it be not adapted to all climes, and to every condition of the many-peopled globe, has, at least so far, “worked well,” and avoided the defects of all preceding confederacies. The extensive and important function assigned to the judicial power in this polity, combined with the peculiar circumstances of our social condition, has



inevitably assigned to the legal profession a large share of public influence.

Generally speaking, the practice of the bar in this country is not confined to particular courts. Our lawyers not being restricted to any particular department of the profession, their technical learning is usually of a more liberal and expansive cast than in the country whence we derived our legal institutions. Their professional habits and technical studies do not unfit them, in any degree, for the performance of the higher and more important functions of statesmen and legislators. There can be no doubt, that, in England, greater skill and nicety of execution are acquired, by the minute subdivision of labor, produced by the state of the profession and the circumstances of society. Hence, we find there more perfect masters of the science of equity, of special pleading, conveying, or of the civil and canon laws as they are administered in the admiralty and consistorial courts.

But the peculiar circumstances and social condition of this young country have aroused the active faculties of the people, and imparted a greater flexibility and variety to the talents of its public men; whilst they have enabled our more eminent lawyers, when called into the public service, to perform all the offices of peace and war with as much ability and success as in those coun

tries where youth are prepared for the duties of public life by a peculiar system of education, exclusively adapted for that purpose. They have stored their minds with miscellaneous knowledge; and, when removed from the bar into the cabinet or the senate, have generally been found to sustain the reputation they had acquired in a more limited walk.

The infancy of the country, the immature state of society, and the freedom of its political institutions, have all contributed to this result. Society is not yet, if indeed it ever will be, broken into those marked distinctions and gradations of rank and occupation, demanding a correspondent separation of mere professional employments, from those connected with the business of the state; whilst, at the same time, the bar, as in the ancient republics, is the principal avenue to public honors and employments. These peculiar circumstances, combined with the singular nature of the judicature exercised by the Supreme Court in constitutional cases, have advanced the science of jurisprudence in the United States far beyond the general condition of our literature, and raised the legal profession to a higher rank than it enjoys in any other country.

Mr. Pinkney coöperated, as an advocate, in laying the foundations of the system of prize-law built up by the Supreme Court during the late



war with Great Britain. His extensive learning and peculiar experience in this science contributed essentially to enlighten the judgments of that tribunal on a branch of jurisprudence in which we had few national precedents, and where the elementary writers on public law are extremely deficient in practical details and a particular application of general principles. Among other cases of capture brought for adjudication before that tribunal, was the celebrated case of the *Nereide*, in which arose the novel question of international law, whether a neutral could lawfully lade his goods on board an *armed* enemy's vessel.

In the argument of this cause, his powers were severely tasked by rivalry, not only with his gifted competitor, Mr. Emmett, but with the counsel associated with him for the captors, Mr. Dallas, who, he said, had "dealt with this great cause in a way so masterly, and had presented it before the Court with such a provoking fulness of illustration, that his unlucky colleague could scarcely set his foot upon a single spot of it without trespassing upon some one of those arguments, which, with an admirable profusion, I had almost said, a prodigality of learning, he has spread over the whole subject. Time, however, which changes all things, and man more than any thing, no longer permits me to speak upon the impulse of ambition. It has left me only that of duty; better, perhaps,

than the feverish impulse which it has supplanted ; sufficient, as I hope, to urge me, upon this and every other occasion, to maintain the cause of truth, by such exertions as may become a servant of the law in a forum like this. I shall be content, therefore, to travel after my learned friend over a part of the track which he has at once smoothed and illuminated, happy, rather than displeased, that he has facilitated and justified the celerity with which I mean to traverse it ; more happy still, if I shall be able, as I pass along, to relieve the fatigue of your Honors, the benevolent companions of my journey, by imparting something of freshness and novelty to the prospect around us.

“To this course I am also reconciled by a pretty confident opinion, the result of general study, as well as of particular meditation, that the discussion in which we are engaged has no claim to that air of intricacy which it has assumed ; that, on the contrary, it turns upon a few very plain and familiar principles, which, if kept steadily in view, will guide us in safety, through the worse than Cretan labyrinth of topics and authorities, that seem to embarrass it, to such a conclusion as it may be fit for this Court to sanction by its judgment.

“I shall, in the outset, dismiss from the cause whatever has been rather insinuated with a prudent delicacy, than openly and directly pressed by

my able opponent, with reference to the personal situation of the claimant, and of those with whom he is united in blood and interest. I am willing to admit that a Christian judicature may dare to feel for a desolate foreigner who stands before it, not for life and death indeed, but for the fortunes of himself and his house. I am ready to concede, that, when a friendly and a friendless stranger sues for the restoration of his all to human justice, she may sometimes *wish* to lay aside a portion of her sternness, to take him by the hand, and, exchanging her character for that of mercy, to raise him up from an abyss of doubt and fear to a pinnacle of hope and joy. In such circumstances, a temperate and guarded sympathy may not unfrequently be virtue.

“But this is the last place upon earth in which it can be necessary to state, that, if it be yielded to as a *motive of decision*, it ceases to be virtue, and becomes something infinitely worse than weakness. What may be the real value of Mr. Pinto’s claim to our sympathy, it is impossible for us to be certain that we know; but thus much we are sure we know, that, whatever may be its value in fact, in the balance of the law it is lighter than a feather shaken from a linnet’s wing, lighter than the down that floats upon the breeze of summer. I throw into the opposite scale the ponderous claim of WAR; a claim of high concernment, not

to us only, but to the world ; a claim connected with the maritime strength of this maritime state, with public honor and individual enterprise, with all those passions and motives, which can be made subservient to national success and glory in the hour of national trial and danger. I throw into the same scale the venerable code of universal law, before which it is the duty of this Court, high as it is in dignity, and great as are its titles to reverence, to bow down with submission. I throw into the same scale a solemn treaty, binding upon the claimant and upon you. In a word, I throw into that scale the rights of belligerent America, and, as embodied with them, the rights of those captors, by whose efforts and at whose cost the naval exertions of the government have been seconded, until our once despised and drooping flag has been made to wave in triumph where neither France nor Spain could venture to show a prow.

“ You may call these rights by what name you please. You may call them *iron* rights ; I care not ; it is enough for me, that they are RIGHTS. It is more than enough for me, that they come before you encircled and adorned by the laureis, which we have torn from the brow of the naval genius of England ; that they come before you recommended, and endeared, and consecrated by a thousand recollections which it would be base

ness and folly not to cherish, and that they are mingled in fancy and in fact with all the elements of our future greatness."

In the course of his argument, Mr. Pinkney insisted that the claimant's property ought to be condemned as prize of war upon the three following grounds ;

1. That the treaty of 1795, between the United States and Spain, contained a positive stipulation adopting the maxim of the northern confederacy, that *free ships shall make free goods* ; and although it did not expressly mention the converse proposition, that *enemy ships should make enemy goods*, yet it did not negative that proposition ; and as the two maxims had always been associated together in the practice of nations, the one was to be considered as implying the other.

2. That, by the Spanish prize-code, neutral property found on board of enemy's vessels was liable to capture and condemnation ; and that, this being the law of Spain, applied by her when beligerent, to us and to all other nations when neutral, by the principle of reciprocity the same rule was to be applied to the property of her subject, which Mr. Pinto must be taken to be, the United States government not having at that time acknowledged the independence of the Spanish American colonies.

3. He contended, that the claim of Mr. Pinto

ought to be rejected on account of his unneutral conduct, in hiring and putting his goods on board of an armed vessel, which sailed under convoy, and actually resisted search.

After fully discussing the first two points, he proceeded ;

“ I come now to the third and last question, upon which, if I should be found to speak with more confidence than may be thought to become me, I stand upon this apology, that I have never been able to persuade myself that it was any question at all. I have consulted upon it the reputed oracles of universal law, with a wish disrespectful to their high vocation, that they would mislead me into doubt. But — *pia sunt, nullumque nefas oracula suadent*. I have listened to the counsel for the claimant, with a hope produced by his reputation for abilities and learning, that his argument would shake from me the sturdy conviction which held me in its grasp, and would substitute for it that mild and convenient skepticism that excites without oppressing the mind, and summons an advocate to the best exertion of his faculties, without taking from him the prospect of success, and the assurance that his cause deserves it. I have listened, I say, and am as great an infidel as ever.

“ My learned colleague, in his discourse upon his branch of the subject, relied in some degree



upon circumstances, supposed by him to be in evidence, but by our opponents believed to be merely assumed. I will not rely upon any circumstances but such as are admitted by us all. I take the broad and general ground, which does not require the aid of such special considerations as might be borrowed from the contested facts.

“ I shall consider the case as simply that of a neutral, who attempts to carry on his trade from a belligerent port, not only under belligerent convoy, but in a belligerent vessel of force, with full knowledge that she has capacity to resist the commissioned vessels, and (if they lie in her way) to attack and subdue the defenceless merchant-ships of the other belligerent, and with the further knowledge, that her commander, over whom in this respect he has no control, has inclination and authority, and is bound by duty so to resist, and is inclined and authorized so to attack and subdue. I shall discuss it as the case of a neutral, who advisedly puts in motion, and connects his commerce and himself with a force thus qualified and conducted; who voluntarily identifies his commerce and himself with a hostile spirit, and authority, and duty, thus known to and uncontrollable by him; who steadily adheres to this anomalous fellowship, this unhallowed league between neutrality and war, — until, in an evil hour,

it falls before the superior force of an American cruiser, when, for the first time, he insists upon dissolving the connexion, and demands to be regarded as an unsophisticated neutral, whom it would be barbarous to censure, and monstrous to visit with penalty. The gentlemen tell us that a neutral may do all this! I hold that he may not, and if he may, that he is a 'chartered libertine,' that he is *legibus solutis*, and may do *any* thing.

"The boundaries, which separate war from neutrality, are sometimes more faint and obscure than could be desired; but there never were any boundaries between them, or they must all have perished, if neutrality can, as this new and most licentious creed declares, surround itself upon the ocean with as much of hostile equipment as it can afford to purchase, if it can set forth upon the great common of the world, under the tutelary auspices and armed with the power of one belligerent bidding defiance to, and entering the lists of battle with the other, and at the same moment assume the aspect and robe of peace, and challenge all the immunities which belong only to submission.

"My learned friends must bear with me if I say, that there is in this idea such an appearance of revolting incongruity, that it is difficult to restrain the understanding from rejecting it without



inquiry, by a sort of intellectual instinct. It is, I admit, of a romantic and marvellous cast, and may, on that account, find favor with those who delight in paradox ; but I am utterly at a loss to conjecture, how a well-regulated and disciplined judgment, for which the gentlemen on the other side are eminently distinguished, can receive it otherwise than as the mere figment of the brain of some ingenious artificer of wonders. The idea is formed by a union of the most repulsive ingredients. It exists by an unexampled reconciliation of mortal antipathies. It exhibits such a rare *discordia rerum*, such a stupendous society of jarring elements, or (to use an expression of Tacitus) of *res insociabiles*, that it throws into the shade the wildest fictions of poetry. I entreat your Honors to endeavor a personification of this motley notion, and to forgive me for presuming to intimate, that if, after you have achieved it, you pronounce the notion to be correct, you will have gone a great way to prepare us, by the authority of your opinion, to receive, as credible history, the worst parts of the mythology of the Pagan world. The Centaur and the Proteus of antiquity will be fabulous no longer.

“The prosopopœia, to which I invite you, is scarcely, indeed, within the power of fancy, even in her most riotous and capricious mood, when she is best able and most disposed to force incompati-

bilities into fleeting and shadowy combination, but, if you can accomplish it, will give you something like the kid and the lion, the lamb and the tiger portentously incorporated, with ferocity and meekness coexistent in the result, and equal as motives of action. It will give you a modern Amazon, more strangely constituted than those with whom ancient fable peopled the borders of the Thermidon, — her voice compounded of the tremendous shout of the Minerva of Homer, and the gentle accents of an Arcadian shepherdess, — with all the faculties and inclinations of turbulent and masculine War, and all the retiring modesty of virgin Peace. We shall have, in one personage, the *pharetrata Camilla* of the *Æneid*, and the Peneian maid of the *Metamorphosis*. We shall have Neutrality, soft and gentle, and defenceless in herself, yet clad in the panoply of her warlike neighbors, — with the frown of defiance upon her brow, and the smile of conciliation upon her lip, — with the spear of Achilles in one hand and a lying protestation of innocence and helplessness unfolded in the other. Nay, if I may be allowed so bold a figure in a mere legal discussion, we shall have the branch of olive entwined around the bolt of Jove, and Neutrality in the act of hurling the latter under the deceitful cover of the former.

“I must take the liberty to assert, that, if this be law, it is not that sort of law of which Hooker

speaks, when, with the splendid magnificence of Eastern metaphor, he says, that 'her seat is the bosom of God, and her voice the harmony of the world.' Such a chimera can never be fashioned into a judicial rule fit to be tolerated or calculated to endure. You may, I know, erect it into a rule, and I shall, in common with others, do my best to respect it; but, until you do so, I am free to say, that in my humble judgment, it must rise upon the ruins of many a principle of peculiar sanctity and venerable antiquity, which it will be your wisdom to preserve and perpetuate."

After having thus spoken, as he said, in metaphors, which, if they would not bear the test of rigorous criticism, he trusted would at least be pardoned, upon the ground that they served to mark out and illustrate his more particular argument, Mr. Pinkney proceeded to consider the effect, which such a license to neutrals as that supposed might produce upon the unarmed trade of the opposite belligerent, and to establish its unlawfulness, both on general principles, and the particular analogies of judicial precedents. But it would be difficult to analyze, and impossible to abridge, this argument, which affords an adequate specimen of his peculiar powers as a forensic debater; and we must, therefore, content ourselves with subjoining the peroration to this admirable speech.

“The little strength with which I set out is at last exhausted, and I must hasten to a conclusion I commit to you, therefore, without farther discussion, the cause of my clients, identified with the rights of the American people, and with those wholesome rules which give to public law simplicity and system, and tend to the quiet of the world.

“We are now, thank God, once more at peace. Our belligerent rights may therefore sleep for a season. May their repose be long and profound. But the time must arrive, when the interests and honor of this great nation will command them to awake, and, when it does arrive, I feel undoubting confidence, that they will rise from their slumber in the fulness of their strength and majesty, unenfeebled and unimpaired by the judgment of this high Court.

“The skill and valor of our infant navy, which has illumined every sea, and dazzled the master states of Europe by the splendor of its triumphs, have given us a pledge, which, I trust, will be dear to every American heart, and influence the future course of our policy, that the ocean is destined to acknowledge the future dominion of the west. I am not likely to live to see it, and, therefore, the more do I seize upon the enjoyment presented by the glorious anticipation. That this dominion, when God shall suffer us to wrest it

from those who have abused it, will be exercised with such justice and moderation as will put to shame the maritime tyranny of recent times, and fix upon our power the affections of mankind, it is the duty of us all to hope ; but it is equally our duty to hope, that we shall not be so inordinately just to others as to be unjust to ourselves."

It is well known that Mr. Pinkney's argument was overruled by the Court, and the sentence of condemnation in the inferior tribunal reversed by a majority of the judges. It may be mentioned, however, as a remarkable example of the uncertainty of the so-called law of nations, as administered by belligerent prize-courts, that it should have been determined about the same time by Sir William Scott, that British captors were entitled to salvage for the recapture of neutral (Portuguese) property on board an *armed* British vessel, upon the ground, that the goods would have been justly liable to condemnation in our courts of admiralty.

Mr. Pinkney took a very decided and zealous part in the struggle between the rival political parties among his fellow-citizens, to which the war had given fresh activity. His direct agency in the negotiations by which our government sought to avoid this lamentable alternative, enabled him to bear conclusive testimony to its long-continued forbearance, and to the stern necessity, which at

last compelled it to resort to arms, in order to vindicate our national honor, rights, and interests. Both his pen and his tongue were diligently employed, in moments of leisure snatched from professional occupations, in the polemic warfare to which the struggle gave rise. He was frequently called upon to address the people at public meetings on the topics connected with it. He wrote numerous newspaper articles on the same subject, and embodied his views of it in a pamphlet addressed to the people of Maryland under the signature of *Publius*, which affords a very fair specimen of his style as a political controversialist. Nor did he shrink from the duty of contributing his share to the duty of defending the state against invasion, a duty from which no man in this country is exempt, and which he performed with characteristic alacrity.

Soon after the declaration of war, he was chosen to the command of a volunteer corps, raised in Baltimore for local defence, and attached to the third brigade of Maryland militia. At the time of the enemy's attack on the city of Washington, he marched with his corps to Bladensburg, and conducted with great personal gallantry in the inglorious action at that place, where he was severely wounded. Some time after the peace, having been elected a representative in Congress from



the city of Baltimore, he resigned his military command.

Soon after his election to Congress, a question of constitutional law, of the greatest public interest, arose in that body, which was discussed with much zeal and talent in both Houses. A commercial convention between the United States and Great Britain had been concluded at London in July, 1815, and subsequently ratified by the President and Senate, by which it was stipulated that the discriminating duties on British vessels and their cargoes, then subsisting under certain acts of Congress, should be abolished in return for a reciprocal stipulation on the part of the British government.

On this occasion, a bill was brought into the House of Representatives to carry the convention into effect, specifically enacting the provisions contained in the treaty itself. This bill was opposed by Mr. Pinkney, in an able and eloquent speech, exhausting the whole subject of discussion. He contended, with great force of reasoning, that both under the international code and our own municipal constitution, the treaty became the supreme law of the land, the instant it was ratified by the President and Senate on one side, and his Britannic Majesty on the other; that it had, *proprio vigore*, the effect of repealing all the laws of Congress which stood in the way of its stipulations; and required no confirmation by that

body to give it complete validity, as a law binding upon every department of the government and upon the whole nation.

The bill passed the House of Representatives, but was rejected in the Senate; that body having passed a mere declaratory bill, enacting that so much of any act of Congress as was contrary to the stipulations of the convention, should be deemed and taken to be of no force or effect. Some further proceedings took place, and the disagreeing votes of the two Houses were at last reconciled by a committee of conference, at whose recommendation the declaratory bill was finally passed by the House of Representatives, and became a law by the approbation of President Monroe. A similar question had arisen during the administration of President Washington, as to the legislative provisions necessary to carry into effect the treaty of 1794 with England.

In the debate on this subject, the same doctrine was insisted on by the administration party as that now maintained by Mr. Pinkney; — that, the constitution having provided, that all treaties made under the authority of the United States should be the supreme law of the land; every treaty being, under the law of nations, an obligatory contract between the nations parties to it; and the treaty in question having been ratified by the President, with the advice and consent of the



Senate, a refusal of the House of Representatives to provide the necessary means for carrying it into effect, would, consequently, be a violation of the treaty and a breach of the national faith with the power to whom that faith had been pledged.

On the other hand, it was contended by the opposition, that a treaty which required an appropriation of money, or any other special legislative provision to carry it into effect, was not, so far, of binding obligation, until Congress had adopted the measures necessary for that purpose. The House of Representatives, on this occasion, ultimately passed a resolution requesting the President to lay before them the instructions he had given to Mr Jay, the minister by whom the treaty had been negotiated, with the correspondence and other papers, so far as they were not improper to be disclosed on account of pending negotiations. President Washington declined complying with this request, alleging that a treaty with a foreign power, when duly made by the President and Senate, became the supreme law of the land; that the assent of the House of Representatives was not necessary to its validity; and therefore the papers requested could not properly be required for the use of the House, unless for the purpose of impeachment, which was not stated to be the object of the call. The House, therefore, passed resolutions disclaiming the power of interfering in

the making of treaties, but asserting its right, whenever stipulations were made within the legislative competence of Congress, to deliberate and decide as to the expediency of carrying them into effect.

Such is certainly the practice in other constitutional governments, — as in England, where the commercial articles of the treaty of Utrecht with France, though duly made and ratified by the crown, remained unexecuted, because Parliament refused to pass the laws necessary to give effect to their provisions. So also in France, as we have seen by the recent example of the treaty of indemnities with the United States, the Chambers assert the right of controlling, by their votes, the appropriations of money, or other specific legislative provisions, which may be required to carry into effect treaties concluded by the crown with foreign powers.

In March, 1816, Mr. Pinkney was again called into the service of his country in a diplomatic capacity. In order to understand the motives which had repeatedly induced him to go abroad in the same service, it is necessary to advert to some of the peculiar circumstances connected with his brilliant success at the bar.

This success was as much the effect of extraordinary labor as of his genius and rare endowments of mind. His continued application to study,

writing, and public speaking, which a physical constitution, rivalling in strength his intellectual, enabled him to keep up with a singular perseverance, was one of the most remarkable features of his character. He was never satiated with investigating his causes, and took infinite pains in exploring their facts and circumstances, and all the technical learning connected with them. He constantly continued the practice of private declamation as a useful exercise, and was in the habit of premeditating his pleadings at the bar and other public speeches, not only as to the general order or method to be observed in treating his subject, the authorities to be relied on, and the leading topics of illustration, but frequently as to the principal passages and rhetorical embellishments. These last he sometimes wrote out beforehand; not that he felt himself deficient in facility or fluency, but in order to preserve the command of a correct and elegant diction.

All those who have heard him address a jury, or a deliberative assembly, well know, that he was a consummate master of the arts of extemporaneous debating. But he believed, with the most celebrated and successful orators of antiquity, that the habit of written composition is necessary to acquire and preserve a style at once correct and graceful in public speaking; which, without this aid, is apt to degenerate into colloquial negligence,

and to become enfeebled by tedious verbosity. His law papers were drawn up with great care ; his written opinions were elaborately composed, both as to matter and style, and frequently exhausted, by a full discussion, the questions submitted for his consideration.

If to all these circumstances be added the fact, that he engaged in the performance of his professional duties with unusual zeal, ever regarding his own reputation as at stake, as well as the rights and interests of his client, — and sensibly alive to every thing which might affect either, and that he spoke with great ardor and vehemence ; it must be evident, that the most robust constitution would not be sufficient to sustain such intense and unintermitted labor, where every exertion was a contest for victory, and each new success a fresh stimulus to ambition.

Those who are curious to see, to what extent of professional excellence such power of application, allied with such force of body and mind, may carry a man in a particular science, may regret that he ever wandered beyond the rugged paths of his profession into another field, for the cultivation of which he was not, perhaps, so liberally endowed by nature. It seems, however, that he found it necessary to vary his occupations, and to retire altogether from the bar for a season, in order to refresh his wearied body and mind, with the

purpose of again returning to it with an alacrity invigorated and quickened by this temporary suspension of his professional pursuits.

He was then induced to accept the appointment, tendered to him by President Monroe, of envoy to the court of Russia, and of special minister to that of Naples, the object of which last mission was, to demand indemnity from the restored government of that kingdom, for the losses sustained by our merchants in consequence of the seizure and confiscation of their property during the reign of Murat. After he had fulfilled the duties of the special mission, he was to proceed to St. Petersburg as minister plenipotentiary to that court. He avowed the motives which induced him to accept this double mission, in a conversation with one of his friends, in which he said, "There are those among my friends, who wonder that I will go abroad, however honorable the service. They know not how I toil at the bar; they know not all my anxious days and sleepless nights; I must breathe awhile; the bow for ever bent will break." "Besides," he added, "I want to see Italy; the orators of Britain I have heard; but I want to visit that classic land, the study of whose poetry and eloquence is the charm of my life; I shall set my foot on its shores with feelings that I cannot describe, and return with new enthusiasm, I hope with new advantages, to the habits of public speaking."

The business of his mission to Naples was completely evaded by the artifices of the Neapolitan court, who hastened his departure by pretences which they had no difficulty in laying aside when he was fairly out of Naples. His instructions did not allow him to wait even for an answer to the note he had presented to the minister of foreign affairs, and he proceeded through Rome, and the other principal Italian cities, to Vienna. From the latter capital, he pursued his way, through Poland, to Petersburg, where he remained about two years, attending to the duties of the mission, pursuing his favorite studies with unwearied alacrity, and at the same time cultivating the elegant society by which he was surrounded.

His peculiar personal habits were formed by his intercourse with the higher circles abroad. His personal neatness, and minute attention to dress, were carried to an extreme which exposed him, while at home, to the charge of foppery and affectation. But it should be remembered, how large a portion of his life he had spent in the higher circles of European society. Though he always piqued himself upon being a finished and elegant gentleman, yet his manners and habits of dress were undoubtedly acquired in Europe; and, so far from being remarkable there, they were merely in accordance with the common and established usages of men of his rank and station. All, whc



have been at any of the European courts, know, that their public men consider it a necessary part of their character, to pay great attention to the elegance and refinements of life; and, after a day, passed in the laborious discharge of their official duties, will spend their evenings in society, and contribute their full share of pleasant trifling. It is their *manière d'être*.

Mr. Pinkney returned from Russia in the summer of 1818, and once more resumed his professional habits and occupations with as much alacrity as if he had never left them. At the following session of the Supreme Court, he delivered, upon the question of the right of the States to tax the national Bank, perhaps his ablest and most eloquent forensic oration, the principles of which were adopted by Mr. Chief Justice Marshall, in delivering the judgment of the Court. In 1819, he was elected by the legislature of Maryland a Senator in Congress.

Soon after he took his seat in the Senate, he delivered his famous speech against the clause in the Bill passed by the House of Representatives, for the admission of Missouri into the Union, upon condition that the introduction of slaves into the new State should be prohibited. The question was finally settled by the House abandoning this clause, and substituting for it a provision pro-

hibiting slavery in the vacant territory to the north and west of Missouri.

In 1821, he made, in the Supreme Court, in the case of *Cohens* against the State of Virginia, an elaborate argument in favor of the appellate jurisdiction of the Court, in cases determined in the State involving the constitutionality of the laws and treaties of the Union. His reasoning in favor of the jurisdiction was adopted by the Court; and it has since been regarded as one of those points of constitutional law, which are most conclusively and satisfactorily established. Indeed, it is not easy to see, how the supremacy of the constitution and laws of the Union could be peaceably maintained against the inroads of jarring State legislation, without the exercise of this jurisdiction by the supreme federal tribunal, which is also essential to preserve that uniformity of interpretation, without which our complicated system of government would soon become a mere chaos of conflicting authorities.

Mr. Pinkney continued his professional labors at the session of the Court in 1822, with the same intense application and burning thirst of professional fame, which had marked his splendid career. He also took a part in the preliminary discussions in the Senate upon the bill for establishing uniform laws of Bankruptcy throughout the Union, an ob-



ject which he had much at heart. He prepared himself for the debate upon the Maryland proposition, relating to the appropriation of the public lands belonging to the United States for the purposes of education.

But his busy life was hurrying to a conclusion. He had exerted himself intemperately in the preparation and argument of a cause of peculiar interest, at a time when the state of his health unfitted him for application to study and business. On the 17th of February, he was attacked by a severe indisposition, doubtless produced by this effort. He mentioned to the writer of this sketch, that he had sat up very late in the night on which he was taken ill, to read Scott's romance of the "*Pirate*," then just published, and made many remarks respecting it, — drawing comparisons between the two heroines, and criticizing the narrative and style with his usual confident and decided tone, and in a way which showed that his imagination had been a good deal excited by the perusal.

From this period, till his decease, he was a considerable part of the time in a state of delirium. In his lucid intervals, his mind reverted to his favorite studies and pursuits, on which, whenever the temporary suspension of his bodily sufferings enabled him, he conversed with great freedom and animation. He seems, however, to have anticipated that his illness must have a fatal termination,

and to have awaited the event with patient fortitude. After a course of acute suffering, he breathed his last on the night of the 25th of February. His funeral was honored by the attendance of the members of both Houses of Congress, of the executive government, the judges and bar of the Supreme Court, and a numerous concourse of citizens, with all those marks of reverential sorrow and respect due to the character and eminent station of the deceased.

At his death, he had not quite completed his fifty-eighth year, an age at which men begin to regard the termination of life, as an object not very remote. But his person was yet robust, his complexion florid, and his general appearance such, aided as it was by the studied carefulness of his toilet, as to give a strong impression of vigorous health and tenaciousness of life. The force of his faculties too, which were not only unimpaired, but seemed only then to have attained full ripeness; the brilliancy of a career, in which, though so long a victor, he was every day winning fresh laurels by fresh exertions; the very keenness of his relish for those gathered fruits of his fame, and for the charms of a life so eminently successful; all these, as they seemed to promise a long postponement of the common doom, rendered it more deeply affecting to the imagination when it thus suddenly arrived. Apparently, however, he did not himself

regard the seeds of his fate as so far from their developement.

His sanguine temperament and plethoric habit of body led him to apprehend a sudden decay of life, or, at least, of his faculties; and he has been heard to speak of the fate of that celebrated lawyer, Luther Martin, as not unlikely to be his own in this particular. He was spared, however, the worst of the maladies of age. He did not linger through those melancholy displays of imbecility, which are caused by the receding tide of life, but seemed to rush to the termination of his course as the busy torrent dashes onward to the sea.

His death produced, both in the metropolis and through the country, a deep and remarkable sensation. We call it remarkable, because it is seldom that mere professional renown, disconnected as it is from popular passion, obtains for itself, in so great a degree, this last and melancholy reward of genius. Nor can we impute it, certainly, even in the case of the remarkable individual in question, distinguished as were his services at the bar, in the Senate, and in foreign affairs, to any fear that the active business of the world would suffer any pause from his death. The theatre of *busy* life never wants actors, and few are they who may flatter themselves, that their exit will produce either disorder or vacancy in the scene. These losses of society are soon repaired. Other talents,

till then crowded from the stage, press forward in the eager competition ; and we daily see the tomb close on virtue and genius, with as little perceptible effect on the great social machine, as on the sun and the breeze, which are feigned, in the elegiac strains of the poet, to darken and sigh over their decay.

We must refer, then, to some other source our strong emotion on the death of one of these intellectual heroes. Perhaps the harsh contrasts, always suggested by death, are heightened by the mental power and activity, which belong to genius. We contemplate with pain the sudden extinction of this subtile spirit, now become insensible to its slow-won honors, and incapable of dispensing the gathered treasures of thought and knowledge. There was something astounding in the hasty close of a career, marked, like Mr. Pinkney's, by such untiring energy to the last, and animated by the consenting applauses of partisan friends and rival competitors.

Few men ever earned those "garlands of the tomb" by a more inflexible pursuit of them through a long life. In him the zeal of reputation was not one of many impulses obeyed by turns, and exciting him at intervals to unusual exertion. It was ever present and predominant, urging him, even more than the appetite of knowledge, to the perpetual increase of his intellectual

stores. His emulation was boundless. "I never heard him allow," said a friend of his, "that any man was his superior in any thing ; in field sports, in music, in drawing ; and especially in oratory, on which his great ambition rested."

Towards the end of his life, he devoted himself almost exclusively to intellectual exertion of some kind. "Thought," to borrow the phrase of one who knew him well, "appeared to be the very breath of his mind." Study was necessary to his spirit, and so far from laborious, that when not engaged in it, or in some active corporeal exercise, he evinced very restless and uneasy feelings. On journeys, he read constantly in his carriage, and even studied his causes there. A life thus wholly "dedicated to closeness and the bettering of his mind," did not require that methodical distribution, which inferior intellects resort to, as a substitute for the power of constant application ; nor did his various engagements permit this rigorous adherence to method.

His hours of study varied according to circumstances ; but they increased progressively with age. He slept little, and always with a light in his chamber ; and might be heard stirring there at the earliest dawn, often retiring to bed again after several hours' reading. He ate rapidly, drank wine freely at his meals, but never sat long at table, except on special occasions ; and could retire

at all times to his study with a mind disposed to severe labor.

Having already anticipated most of the particulars, which must be combined in order to form a just estimate of the eminent person, of whom we have endeavored to collect a few scattered traits, we will not detain the reader by attempting to blend them into a studied portrait. In tracing the principal outlines of his public character, his professional talents and attainments must necessarily occupy the most prominent place. To extraordinary natural endowments he added deep and various knowledge in his profession. A long course of study and practice had wedded him to the science of jurisprudence. His peculiar intellectual powers were most conspicuous in this science, and his principal labors as a legislator were on topics connected with it.

He had felt himself originally attracted to its study by that invincible inclination, and that strong instinct, which point genius to its true vocation ; it was his main pursuit in life ; and he never entirely lost sight of it in his occasional deviations into other pursuits and employments. The lures of political ambition and the charms of polished society, or, perhaps, a vague desire of universal accomplishment and general applause, might sometimes tempt him to stray for a season from the path, which the original bent of his genius had



assigned him. But he ever returned, with fresh ardor and new delight, to his appropriate vocation. He was devoted to the law with a true enthusiasm; and his other studies and pursuits, so far as they had a fixed and serious object, were valued chiefly as they might minister to this idol of his affections. It was in his profession, that he found himself at home; in this consisted his pride and his pleasure; for, as he said, "the bar is not the place to acquire or preserve a false or fraudulent reputation for talents," and on that theatre he felt conscious of possessing those powers, which would command success.

Even when abroad, he never entirely neglected his legal studies. But when at home, and actively engaged in the practice of his profession, he toiled with almost unparalleled industry. All other pursuits, the pleasures of society, and even the repose which nature demands, were sacrificed to this engrossing object. His character, in this respect, affords a bright example for the imitation of the younger members of the profession. This entire devotion to his professional pursuits was continued, with unremitting perseverance, to the end of his career. If the celebrated Talon could say of the still more celebrated D'Aguesseau, on hearing his first speech at the bar, "that he would willingly *end* as that young man *commenced*," every youthful aspirant to forensic fame among us



might wish to begin his professional exertions with the same love of labor, and the same ardent desire of distinction, which marked the efforts of William Pinkney throughout his life.\*

This intense application and burning ambition continued to animate his labors to the last moments of his existence. He continually held up the very highest standard of excellence in this noble career, and pursued it with unabated diligence and zeal, keeping all his faculties continually upon the stretch, as if his entire reputation was staked upon each particular exertion. He guarded with anxious and jealous solicitude the fame thus acquired. The writer well remembers in the last, and one of his ablest pleadings, in the Supreme Court, remonstrating with him upon the necessity of his refraining from such laborious efforts in the actual state of his health, and with what vehemence he replied, "That he did not desire to live a mo-

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\* "M. D'AGUESSEAU avait fait le premier essai de ses talens dans la charge d'Avocat au Châtelet, où il entra à l'âge de vingt-un ans; et quoiqu'il ne l'eût exercée que quelques mois, son père ne douta pas qu'il ne fût pas capable de remplir une troisième charge d'Avocat-Général au Parlement, qui venait d'être créée. Il y parut d'abord avec tant d'éclat, que le célèbre DENIS TALON, alors Président à Mortier, dit *qu'il voudrait finir comme ce jeune homme commençait.*" — *Abtégé de la Vie de M. le Chancelier d'Aguesseau.*

ment after the standing he had acquired at the bar was lost, or even brought into doubt or question."

What might not be expected from professional emulation, directed by such an ardent spirit and such singleness of purpose, even if sustained by far inferior abilities! But no abilities, however splendid, can command success at the bar, without intense labor and persevering application. It was these, which secured to Mr. Pinkney the most extensive and lucrative practice ever acquired by any American lawyer, and which raised him to such an enviable height of professional eminence. For many years, he was the acknowledged head of the bar in his native State; and, during the last ten years of his life, the principal period of his attendance in the Supreme national court, he enjoyed the reputation of having been rarely equalled, and perhaps never excelled, in the power of reasoning upon legal subjects. This was the faculty, which most remarkably distinguished him

His mind was acute and subtile, and at the same time comprehensive in its grasp; rapid and clear in its conceptions, and singularly felicitous in the exposition of the truths it was employed in investigating. He seemed to have an unlimited command of the greatest variety of the most beautiful and appropriate diction, and the faculty of adorning the driest and most unpromising subjects. His style does not appear to have been originally

modelled after any particular standard, or imitated from the example of any particular writer or speaker. It was apparently formed from his peculiar manner of investigating and illustrating the subjects with which he had to deal, and was impressed with the stamp of his vigorous and comprehensive intellect. When it had received all the improvement, which his maturer studies and experience in the practice of extemporaneous and written composition enabled him to give it, his diction more nearly approached to the model of that pure, copious, and classical style, which graced the judicial eloquence of Sir William Scott, than to any other known standard. It had somewhat more of amplitude, and fulness, and variety of illustration, and of that vehement energy, which is looked for in the pleadings of an advocate, but which would be unbecoming the judgment-seat. It also borrowed occasionally the copiousness, force, and idiomatic grace, with the boldness and richness of metaphor, which distinguish the elder writers of English prose. But, in all its essential qualities, Mr. Pinkney's style was completely formed long before he had the advantage of studying any of these models of eloquence. The fragments of his works, which have been published,\*

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\* See "Some Account of the Life, Writings, and Speeches of William Pinkney. By Henry Wheaton. 1826."

will enable the reader to form some judgment both of its characteristic excellences and defects.

After all, the great fame of his eloquence must rest mainly on tradition, as no complete memorials of his most interesting speeches at the bar, or in the Senate, have been preserved. Much of the reputation of an orator depends upon those glowing thoughts and expressions, which are struck out in the excitement and warmth of debate, and which even the speaker himself is afterwards unable to recover. Most of the poetry of eloquence is of this evanescent character. The beautiful imagery, which is produced in this manner from the excitement of a rich and powerful mind, withers and perishes as soon as it springs into existence. The attempt to replace it by rhetorical ornament, subsequently prepared in the cold abstraction of the closet, is seldom successful. Hence, some portions of Mr. Pinkney's speeches, which were begun to be written out by himself with the intention of publishing them, will be found, perhaps, to be somewhat too much elaborated, and to bear the marks of studied ornament and excessive polish.

The writer is, however, enabled to assert from his own recollection, that, whilst they have certainly lost in freshness and vigor by this process, in no instance have these more striking passages been improved in variety and richness of ornament, or splendor of diction. Indeed, he often

poured forth too great a profusion of rhetorical imagery in extemporaneous speaking. His style was frequently too highly wrought and embellished and his elocution too vehement and declamatory for the ordinary purposes of forensic discussion. But whoever has listened to him even upon a dry and complicated question of mere technical law where there seemed to be nothing on which the mind delighted to fasten, must recollect what a charm he diffused over the most arid and intricate discussions by the clearness and purity of his language, and the calm flow of his graceful elocution, which seemed only to chafe, and swell, and over leap its natural channel, when encountering some mightier theme.

His favorite mode of reasoning was from the analogies of law, tracing up its technical rules to their original principles and historical sources. He followed the precept given by Pliny, and *sowed his arguments broad-cast*, amplifying them by every variety of illustration of which the subject admitted, and deducing from them a connected series of propositions and corollaries, gaining in beautiful gradations on the mind, and linked together by an adamant chain of reasoning.

Of the extent and solidity of his legal attainments, it would be difficult to speak in adequate terms, without the appearance of exaggeration. He was profoundly versed in the ancient learning

of the common law, its technical peculiarities, and feudal origin. Its subtle distinctions and artificial logic were familiar to his early studies, and enabled him to expound with admirable force and perspicuity the rules of real property. He was familiar with every branch of commercial law ; and super-added, at a later period of his life, to his other legal attainments, an extensive acquaintance with the principles of public law and the practice of the prize-courts. In his legal studies, he preferred the original text writers and reporters, (*e fontibus haurire*,) to all those digests, abridgments, and elementary treatises, which lend so many convenient helps and facilities to the modern lawyer, but which he considered as adapted to form sciolists, and to encourage indolence and superficial habits of investigation. His favorite law-book was the Coke-Littleton, which he had read many times. Its principal texts were treasured up in his memory, and his arguments at the bar abounded with perpetual recurrences to the principles and analogies drawn from this rich mine of common law learning.

Different estimates have been made of the extent and variety of his merely literary accomplishments. He was not what is commonly called a learned man ; but he excelled in those branches of human knowledge, which he had cultivated as auxiliary to his principal pursuit. Among his other accomplishments, (as has been before noticed,) he



was a thorough master of the English language, its grammar and idiom, its terms and significations, its prosody, and, in short, its whole structure and vocabulary. Speaking with reference to any high literary standard, his early education was defective. He had doubtless acquired in early life some knowledge of classical literature, but not sufficient to satisfy his own ideas of what was necessary to support the character of an accomplished scholar.

He used to relate to his young friends an anecdote, which explains one of the motives which induced him, at a mature age, after he had risen to eminence, to review and extend his classical studies. It illustrates, at the same time, one of the most remarkable traits of his character, that resolution and firmness of purpose, with which he devoted himself to the acquisition of any branch of knowledge he deemed it desirable to possess. During his first residence in England, some question of classical literature was discussed at table in a social party where he was present, and the guests, in turn, gave their opinions upon it. Mr. Pinkney being silent for some time, an appeal was made to him for his opinion, when he had the mortification of being compelled to acknowledge that he was unacquainted with the subject. In consequence of this incident he was induced to resume his classical studies, and actually put himself under the care of an instructor for the purpose



of reviewing and extending his acquaintance with ancient literature.

The acquisition of such knowledge may be recommended, and no doubt was sought by him for a higher purpose than merely completing the circle of liberal accomplishments. He never after neglected to cultivate attainments which he found so useful in enlarging his knowledge of his own language, improving his taste, and strengthening and embellishing his forensic style. Attempts have recently been made, unduly to depreciate the utility of classical learning; and certainly the expediency of devoting so large a portion of time as is allotted to the acquisition of the languages of Greece and Rome in the education of the higher classes in England, and of all classes in Germany, may well be questioned.

But in this country, at least, there is no fear that our youth will be saturated with classical learning, so as to leave neither time nor capacity for the acquisition of other knowledge more directly useful in the active business of life. The discipline of the mind, and the cultivation of the taste, in the earlier period of youth, is best promoted by the study of languages. "The memory is then more susceptible and tenacious of impressions; and the learning of languages being chiefly the work of memory, it seems precisely fitted to the powers of this period, which is long enough,

too, for acquiring the most useful modern, as well as ancient languages."\* And we may add, that the bright examples of ancient virtue, and the perfect models of ancient taste, are best studied in the originals. That generous love of freedom, of fame, and of country, which was the animating soul of the Greek and Roman republics, cannot be too early imbibed by the youth of every free state. Whilst they are taught duly to estimate the more wise and perfect organization of modern societies, they should be warmed and cheered with those noble sentiments which illumine the pages of the eloquent writers of antiquity, which are the best fruits, and, at the same time, the surest preservatives of liberal institutions.

During the whole course of his active and busy life, Mr. Pinkney pursued his professional studies, and those connected with the English language and literature, with the strictest method and the most resolute perseverance. In other respects, he seems to have read in the most desultory manner possible; in such a way, perhaps, as any man would be likely to pursue, who, with a vigorous intellect and a disposition to industry, had no very precise object before him but to gratify his curiosity and to keep pace with the current literature of the day.

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\* JEFFERSON'S *Notes*, Query XIV

His tenacious memory enabled him to retain the stores of miscellaneous knowledge he had thus acquired. His mind was enriched with literary and historical anecdote, which constituted the principal interest of his conversation, the charm of which was heightened by the facility and habitual elegance of his colloquial style. Among the modern English classics, Johnson and Gibbon were his favorite prose writers, chiefly, perhaps, because he thought their elaborate and elevated rhetorical style proper models for an orator. Pope and Milton were his chosen poets. In the copy of the last, in the possession of his family, all the remarkable passages are underlined, and he quoted them with readiness from memory. *Comus* he distinguished as the best sustained of English poems, in the elegant and various felicity of its diction, and was fond of reciting aloud the passages which he deemed most remarkable for harmony and beauty of thought and expression.

He piqued himself on his critical knowledge of the elegances of his own tongue; and, though he may have overrated his taste, his knowledge on this point was confessedly minute and extensive. His table was generally furnished with half a dozen works on prosody, and as many dictionaries; and he frequently indulged himself in a fancy for coining new words, or reviving obsolete ones, and then defending them by analogy, or by

the authority of the classics. Of his *euphuism*, for so we may call it, which he sometimes displayed at the bar, to the annoyance of his less *literate* brethren, he left a somewhat diverting record. It is a copy of a bulky dictionary published some years ago in this country, all grievously underscored, and full of marginal remarks, petitions, and interrogatories addressed to the author, written with playful spleen, and craving to know the reason of the multifarious impurities which he had cast into the "well of English undefiled."

He possessed, in an eminent degree, that robustness of constitution, which is hardly less necessary in study, than Napoleon deemed it in war. His recreations were mostly of that sort deemed favorable to bodily health; he was attached to field sports, and excelled in them; and, though he seemed almost indefatigable, generally returned from his sporting excursions overcome with fatigue. But as he was of a sanguine and melancholy temperament, he was apt to fancy himself ill. At such times, he diverted himself with games of skill, in which he was a proficient, such as chess, draughts, and the like. He was once quite a capital billiard-player, and seldom met his equal in whist.

During his residence in England, he amused himself very much with his children, who were then young, mixing occasionally in their most

childish sports. He used there to draw for one of his sons almost every night, and, what perhaps few persons know, he handled the pencil like a master. He assisted, moreover, in teaching one of his daughters music, to which task he brought a good deal of skill and an admirable ear. He was fond of the best novels, and, by way of mental dissipation, sometimes liked to hear the worst, and, when exhausted in mind, or depressed in spirits, would listen to any trash from the Minerva press, French novels, and fairy tales. The company of young persons, especially those of talent, was very attractive to him; and, when occasion presented itself, he was pleased to do them any service. When they were assembled in his house, he would saunter from his study to the adjoining parlor, mingle in the topic or the jest of the moment, and then return. This he would repeat many times in an evening.

Whether he was endowed by nature with those large and comprehensive views, and that extensive knowledge of mankind, which constitute the essential qualities of a great statesman, and which would have fitted him to take a leading part in the political affairs of his country, and to guide its public councils in those moments of difficulty, when "a new and troubled scene is opened, and the file affords no precedent,"—is a question which we have no adequate means of determining. His

diplomatic correspondence will show, indeed, that he was perfectly competent to maintain his own reputation for general talent, and to acquit himself in a manner creditable to his country, when brought in contact with the ablest and most practised of European statesmen,—with a Canning and a Wellesley. But that correspondence bears evident marks, throughout, of the constraint imposed upon it by the nature of his instructions from our government, which forbade him from replying to the sarcastic taunts and affected indifference of those haughty ministers, in other than those conciliatory terms, which, both at home and abroad, were unhappily mistaken for the effects of fear of provoking hostilities between the two countries.

It is principally in his private correspondence with President Madison, that we perceive how capable Mr. Pinkney was of appreciating the mighty scenes which were then passing before him, and the characters and motives of the actors, who, intent upon the great European drama, disdained to consider what might be the consequences of calling into existence another naval power capable of contesting that supremacy, which England had acquired on the ocean. He rightly concluded, that it was not by appeals to her justice or her policy, but by fairly wrestling with her on her own element, that England could be taught to respect us.



But, as has been before observed, his profession was the engrossing pursuit of his life; and beyond that, his talents shone most conspicuously in those senatorial discussions, which fall within the province of the constitutional lawyer. In the various questions relating to the interpretation of the federal constitution, discussed in the Supreme Court, his depth of learning and powers of reasoning contributed very much to enlighten its judgments. In the discussion of that class of causes, especially, which, to use his own expressions, “presented the proud spectacle of a peaceful review of the conflicting sovereign claims of the government of the Union and the particular States, by this more than Amphictyonic council,” his arguments were characterized by a fervor, earnestness, gravity, eloquence, and force of reasoning, which convinced all who heard him that he delivered his own sentiments as a citizen, and was not merely solicitous to discharge his duty as an advocate. He exerted an intellectual vigor proportioned to the magnitude of the occasion. He saw in it “a pledge of the immortality of the Union, of a perpetuity of national strength and glory, increasing and brightening with age, of concord at home, and reputation abroad.”

As to the general nature and operation of our federative system, he thought with the illustrious authors of the Letters of PUBLIUS,



with Madison, Jay, and Hamilton, — that, like other similar forms of government recorded in history, “its tendency was rather to anarchy among the members, than tyranny in the head,” and that a general government, at least as energetic as that intended to be established by the framers of the constitution, was indispensably necessary to secure the great objects of the Union.

Believing these to be, generally speaking, in more peril from excessive jealousy on the part of the respective members of the confederacy, than from encroachments by the central government, he carried the weight of his support to that side of the vessel of state which he thought to be in danger of losing its equipoise. Absolute unanimity is not to be expected on questions of such intrinsic difficulty as spring up on the debatable ground, which imperfectly marks the boundaries between the State and national sovereignties. Still less is it to be looked for in the discussion of such controversies as that arising from the admission of the State of Missouri into the Union, where so many deep-seated prejudices and passions mingled in the debate, and a contest for political power and claims of private interest were involved in the result. That mighty tempest at one time seemed to shake the Union to its centre, and, in the language of Mr. Pinkney, threatened to “push from its moorings the sacred ark of the common safety,

and to drive this gallant vessel, freighted with every thing dear to an American bosom, upon the rocks, or lay it a sheer hulk upon the ocean." The agitation of the billows has not yet subsided; and a distant posterity will alone be capable of pronouncing an impartial judgment upon the merits of a question, complicated of so many considerations of humanity, of policy, and of constitutional power.

But a spirit of liberality may even now tolerate an honest difference of opinion on such a subject. It should be the part of the wise and the good to pour oil over this angry sea, to endeavor to calm the passions excited by that discussion, rather than to revive them in new shapes still more portentous to the peace and happiness of our country. Whatever difference of opinion may exist as to the part which Mr. Pinkney took in this question, all unprejudiced minds ought, we think, to concur in the sentiment expressed by him at the close of his speech in the Senate on that memorable occasion.

After alluding to the ambitious motives which were imputed to some of those engaged in this controversy, he added; "For myself I can truly say, that I am wholly destitute of what is commonly called ambition. It is said that ambition is the disease of noble minds. If it be so, mine must be a vulgar one; for I have nothing to desire in this world but professional fame, health and

competence for those who are dear to me, a long list of friends among the wise and the virtuous, and honor and prosperity for my country. But, if I possessed any faculties, by the exertion of which, at a moment like the present, I could gain a place in the affectionate remembrance of my countrymen, and connect my humble name with the stability of the American Union by tranquillizing the alarms which are now believed to endanger it, I know of no reward on this side the grave, save only that of an approving conscience, which, put in comparison with it, I should think worthy of a sigh, if lost ; of exultation, if obtained.” \*

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\* The materials for this memoir have been drawn from the author's larger work, entitled "Some Account of the Life, Writings, and Speeches of William Pinkney"; and also from an article on that work in the North American Review.

L I F E  
OF  
WILLIAM ELLERY;

BY  
EDWARD T. CHANNING.



# WILLIAM ELLERY.

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## CHAPTER I.

### *His Birth, early Years, Marriage and Profession.*

THERE are men, who exercise an important influence within a limited sphere, in a thousand nameless ways, and, it may be, without a distinct consciousness of it, on their own part, or that of others, who pass out of life with not one strong result, one striking manifestation of their minds to make them of public importance. The most that can be said of them is, that some "invisible virtue" was communicated by them to others, imparting, perhaps, a healthy action to the minds of the young, or encouraging useful enterprises, or finding its way to the abodes of the humble, erring, and weak, to inspire them with prudence and self-respect, and a sense of justice and decency, and thus gradually giving a tone to manners and opinions in the neighborhood. Events may call them to important public stations, and connect

them with the history of their country ; but they remain precisely the same men. Their sphere is, indeed, wider and more conspicuous than before ; their objects are larger, and more force is evolved ; but the men and their influence are unchanged. Vanity cannot unsettle their estimate of themselves. Ambition cannot mislead them to undertake offices, which they know do not belong to them. Conspicuous actions are still to be performed, and dizzy heights to be held, by others ; while to them is left the more obscure, but imperishable power of character, wisdom, and faithful diligence. It is of a man like these, that some notices are here offered.

Mr. Ellery's information respecting his paternal ancestors, and the time and circumstances of their leaving the mother country, was very limited, though he had given some attention to the subject. The first of the name in New England, it is believed, arrived a little after the middle of the seventeenth century ; and, towards the close, we find one branch of the family in Bristol, Rhode Island. His father, William Ellery, was born there, October 31st, 1701, and graduated at Harvard College in 1722. He was afterwards a wealthy merchant of Newport, and seems to have enjoyed the confidence of the people, as he was elected to the offices of Judge, Assistant, and Deputy-Governor. His piety, and attachment to



civil and religious liberty, and his many private virtues, are commemorated in a still legible epitaph in Latin.\* He died March 15th, 1764, leaving several children.

WILLIAM, his second son, was born in Newport, December 22d, 1727, and, with his elder brother, was entered at Harvard College, probably in 1743. Little is known of his college life besides the frolics and jests in which he had his full share, and which he used to relate in a most diverting style. His love of the Latin classics was no doubt formed at the College. His never-ceasing attention to them, and to the nicest points in the grammar and prosody of the language, is no slight indication of early taste and habits. And whatever defects there may have been in the former modes of teaching at that seminary, it is not disputed, that there was a diligent instruction of young men in the ancient tongues. It may seem premature to speak, in this connexion, of what was most observable in his literary preferences of after life ; but we have reason to think, that these

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\* This inscription was written by President Stiles of Yale College, for many years a clergyman in Newport. It was submitted to the revision of Dr. William Kneeland, of Cambridge, and Mr. James Lovell, of Boston ; whose letters on the subject are somewhat curious, as specimens of what might now be deemed the elegant pedantry of our fathers

were established at an early period ; and that even then, Horace was his favorite among the Roman poets, and that in English literature he inclined strongly to the writers of Queen Anne's time. Though this may have been partly owing to accident, or the fashion of the day, yet there seemed to be an almost natural direction of his mind towards writers who abounded in wit, in strong sense closely and pointedly expressed, and in observation of mankind. It was a taste that he never lost ; but it did not interfere with his liberal study and admiration of English and Latin literature generally, nor of the French, to which his attention was drawn later in life.

His residence at Cambridge was important to him in more than a literary point of view. He was received into the excellent society of the place, where he became attached to the lady whom he afterwards married, and intimate with the family of Judge Trowbridge, her near connexion. The scenes of his early studies and first affection grew dearer to him with his years, whether as the witnesses of his blessings or afflictions. There are but few events in one's domestic history more beautiful, more memorable, than his annual visits to this his second home, till he had passed his eightieth year. It was not merely a return to his literary haunts and the friends of his youth, to be welcomed to the boundless hospitality of the

times. The sources of interest were multiplied and deepened. A married daughter resided there. With some of his descendants he could recall his early days at the College. And, as we shall presently see, the place was further endeared to him by sorrow.

He took his first degree in 1747; and he loved the College ever afterwards with the feelings of an English scholar for his Alma Mater. The recollection of his room-mate, many years after their separation, draws from him a warm expression of old college attachment. In a letter to Mr. Andrew Oliver, of Salem, in 1771, he says; "I have already about fifty subscribers to the proposals you sent me for the publication of your *Essay on Comets*, and hope to procure more. It would give me great pleasure to encourage genius in any gentleman; especially in a gentleman with whom I once had the happiness to be intimately connected. This alone would have been a sufficient inducement to me to promote the subscription; but when to this is added the request of my old *chum*, the thought of obliging *him* lays me under a necessity to do it."

From Cambridge, Mr. Ellery returned to his native town, to settle himself for life; and, probably, he entered soon upon business as a merchant, the favorite pursuit of his family. Newport, at that time, was a wealthy commercial capital, and

a place of frequent resort for strangers, not merely for its delightful climate and rural and ocean scenery, but also for its liberal, and, perhaps, too luxurious hospitality. Down to the revolution, it offered every encouragement to a young man entering on business, to say nothing of its attractions to one of a social temper. In October, 1750, Mr. Ellery was married to Ann Remington, of Cambridge, daughter of Jonathan Remington, one of the Justices of the Superior Court of Massachusetts. The connexion was deemed imprudent by his father, in one so young, who had yet to make his way in the world; but the coolness that followed was removed upon the birth of a grandchild; and the wife, who seems to have been first received to his affection for the child's sake, became, by her kindness and good sense, his pride and comfort till death. She was an excellent woman, prudent, affable, and hospitable, ever watchful over her children, and careful that her husband should find no place so agreeable to him as his home.

An anecdote of his married life is remembered, which, in one respect, is illustrative of the kind of social habits of the day, and of more importance as concerns his own character and happiness. It was his custom to spend his evenings with a party of young friends at some place of convivial resort; and it is enough to say of their amusements, that

they were any thing but intellectual, and just suited to make one's home the last place he would look to for his pleasures, and, of course, the very place where duty itself must soon become irksome. It was an essential part of domestic economy at that time, for the matron to note upon the margin or blank leaves of her almanac, any of the memorable occurrences in the daily experience of the household. One day his wife had recorded, as its most precious event, and with expressions of tenderness and gratitude, that her husband had passed the evening with her and her children. This, not many days after, fell under his eye; but he said not a word. If there was any upbraiding, it was all from his own heart. The same evening, he returned to his usual haunt, and at once announced to his friends that he had come to take his parting cup with them, and that, hereafter, he should seek his evening pleasures at home. Some disbelieved, others scoffed;—could this be true of a man of his gayety and spirit? But their surprise and boisterous ridicule he was prepared for, and, true to his purpose and word, he left them, and was ever after a thoroughly domestic man. And such was the effect of his resolution upon them, that, in no long time, the party was broken up, and succeeded by pleasant meetings in each other's families.

He often told this little incident, as if it had

deeply moved him. He had connected it indissolubly with a beloved wife, whom he too early lost ; and, when he spoke of it, there was a tremulousness upon his lip, and a placidness of expression, which denoted his never-ceasing gratitude and love. Fifty years after her death, he says of her, "You read, in the grave-yard in Cambridge, the epitaph of your grandmother, a woman dear to me and to all who were acquainted with her. Alas ! I was too early deprived of her society ; and it was not a single arrow that pierced my heart. In the same year, my father was taken away." She died in Cambridge, September 7th, 1764, at the age of thirty-nine ; and her husband returned to his home and children a sorely stricken and bowed-down man.

Mr. Ellery used, in later life, to speak of himself as having turned his attention to many pursuits, and, with the usual event, of doing very well in none. For several years after his marriage, he was engaged, to some extent, in merchandise, and, during part of the time, he was naval officer of the Colony. He gave up his first line of business in the time of embarrassing revenue acts and of non-importation agreements, when there was little or nothing for him to do, but to join, heart and hand, as he did, with the "Sons of Liberty." On the possible advantages of a life of various employments, as preparing one for



widely differing stations, and discovering some hidden powers, it would not be advisable to speculate, while speaking of a man whose urgent advice was to keep to a single business, and learn to love it and seek distinction in it, and whose own habits inclined more and more with his years to steady, systematic application.

A passage from one of his letters, of so recent date as 1818, shows that he early formed a taste for gardening, the favorite occupation and amusement of his later years. "I wish you to inquire for, and procure an ear or two of Canadian corn, of some of your gentlemen-farmers who may have planted it. I will plant it the next season. The improvements that are making in your large and rich State, in agriculture and horticulture, and in the breed of various species of beasts, will not only be very advantageous to it, but may be so to our poor little State. I was among the first who followed the example, that was set before us by some European gardeners, who were imported into this town when I was a young married man; and, in consequence of our rival exertions, ten times as great a quantity of vegetables was raised upon the same quantity of ground annually, as had ever been raised before. What is it that somebody said, in commendation of him, who should make two spires of grass grow where only one grew before?"



In 1767, Mr. Ellery was married a second time; and in 1770 he began the practice of the law. Nothing is known of his preparatory studies for the new profession, nor of the amount of practical skill he may have acquired from serving as clerk of one of the courts during the two preceding years. It is clear that he thought modestly of his qualifications; for, in 1771, he writes thus to Henry Marchant, then in London, who had left his legal business in charge of Mr. Ellery. "If I had time, I would let you know what happened at the Superior Court; let it suffice you, that your friend stood forth and pleaded two causes successfully, alone, and assisted in three others. Bravo, say you; I say, Bravissimo." And, not long after, in consulting his eminent legal friends in Cambridge upon some involved case, he writes; "With regard to most of the questions, I am pretty well satisfied; but, as they respect a matter of considerable importance, I would not choose to give my advice without first consulting some person learned in the law, and hearing his opinion." Though not a man of extravagant expectations, he yet had great alacrity of spirits, and was not given to despondency in any view of things; so that we can easily conceive of him in the gloomy state of public affairs, and the doubtful promise of his own, as entering with all his might upon a wholly new course of life, and as awakened to a new sense of his powers by the pressure of public danger

His letter-books at this period show that he was in considerable practice, and that he received business from gentlemen in several of the other Colonies as well as from his neighbors. This correspondence is not confined to professional topics ; a place is found for private and political concerns, and for exceedingly characteristic reflections upon any matter that happened to draw his attention.

One cause, in which he was employed, deserves a little notice, as it shows how deeply he had entered into the all-engrossing question of liberty, and how thoroughly the spirit of revolution had wrought itself into his most responsible judgments.

An action had been brought before the court at Providence, by David Hill, against gentlemen of the New York Committee of Inspection, to recover damages for goods of Hill's, which had been burnt, and for which he held the committee responsible. Mr. Ellery was retained in the defence by several of them. and two or three passages in his letters will give a pretty clear view of the case and the advocate.

September 27th, 1771, he says ; " With regard to the suit brought against you and the other gentlemen of the late Committee of Inspection at New York, I would observe, that if you can prove, by disinterested witnesses, that you told Hill, that you did not order nor command him to store his goods, and that you did not take charge of them,

but only believed they would be quite safe at Platt's house till the opinion of the committee was known (agreeably to what you write me), I think it will be impossible that Hill should ever recover a judgment against you. And, indeed, if you had actually ordered the goods to be stored; considering the situation of our public affairs, the necessity which there then seemed to be that non-importation agreements should be entered into, in order to effect a repeal, if possible, of an oppressive act, laying duties on certain articles of commerce; considering that non-importation agreements were almost universal through the Colonies, and that Hill carried goods into New York (knowing that, at that very time, there subsisted such an agreement among the merchants of your city,) with mercenary views, and attempted to violate resolves entered into for the common benefit; considering these and many other things which might be offered, he deserved, in my opinion, to lose his goods, and I believe a jury will think so; however illegal it may be to force a man's goods from him, by means whereof they might be burned." "You may depend upon my exerting myself in your behalf, in this suit particularly; for the cause of liberty is a cause which I always have had close at heart, and I once had the honor to be of a committee of the Sons of Liberty in this place."

The plaintiff recovered, however, both in the lower court and on the appeal; but Mr. Ellery ascribes his failure to any thing but a bad cause. "It would have given me great pleasure," he says to his clients (April, 1772), "to have succeeded in this cause, particularly, because it is in some sort the cause of liberty; and if it had been tried while the spirit of freedom was vigorous in every part of the community, even at Providence, we had come off triumphantly."

Though his exertions and trouble in this suit had been great, and so acknowledged, there was yet some misunderstanding about his compensation. In another letter, a few months after, he details his services and claims, and closes with some vivacity.

"That you should think I was to expect only this sum from you," said he, "and charge liberty with my extra trouble, was more than surprising to me; it was really shocking. The cause of liberty, however unsuccessful her advocates may have been, or however rewarded, is still a glorious cause; a cause which I originally engaged in from no pecuniary views, but from principles, the seeds of which are implanted in all human kind; the love of society and the love of country. I rejoice that I had a share, however small it might be, in the repeal of the Stamp Act. The non-importation agreement I wished well to, because

I imagined it would have demolished the revenue acts, by which our trade is restricted and embarrassed. And I have reason to think it would have fully answered that purpose, if it had been adhered to only six months longer. I am very sorry that any gentlemen, who were concerned in that agreement, should be sufferers thereby; especially I lament, that any of the Committee of Inspection of New York should suffer by an unjust judgment in this Colony; and, if it will give you, Sir, and Messrs. ——— any satisfaction under your ill-success, to withdraw my claim to a gratuity for my extra trouble, I will readily do it, and am your and their assured friend and humble servant."

It was said before, that this series of business letters was of a very mixed character; and though it may interrupt what little of narrative there is in this memoir, yet one or two extracts may be inserted here, if they serve no other purpose than to show his manner of thinking and writing in middle life. They are taken from two letters to his old friend, William Redwood, then residing in Philadelphia; and, in these, as in his later correspondence, we may see how freely he follows out any present train of thought, and falls into any form of speech that offers itself. He never had the faintest shade of affectation. He might be reserved, where it was proper; but, with his friends, he was a cordial, plain-spoken man.

*“February 11th, 1773. “I had determined, before I took up my pen, not to have said a word on this sorrowful subject, lest I might thereby open and cause those wounds to bleed afresh, which the lenient hand of time might have begun to close; but friendship for you and your children hath constrained me to express some ideas, which have arisen in my mind, to utter some portion of my grief, and to mingle my tears with yours on this melancholy occasion.*

*“I can and do sincerely sympathize with you, for I have myself passed through some of the severest scenes of affliction. Amidst those scenes I had all the comfort which the advice, condolence, and wishes of my friends could impart. It was not small, and I thanked them for it. But tears are a debt we owe to departed friends. They are a debt to nature; and ‘a debt to nature is a debt to God.’ It ought to be, it must be paid; and they will flow, till time dispels those clouds which feed them, and dries up every source of grief.*

*“We are not, however, to abandon ourselves to sorrow. In such melancholy seasons, we are to avoid solitude, mix with the company of our friends, engage in business, or pursue some innocent amusement. Otherwise, we may, perhaps, while we are paying the tribute which friendship demands, pay the great debt which we ourselves*



owe to nature. Last Friday, old P—— H—— discharged that debt, and this afternoon I shall attend his funeral. To-morrow, I may be, perhaps, as joyful as ever, be engaged in company or in business, in discharging or collecting debts of a different kind from those before mentioned; I may be collecting some for you. How strange is our state! how incongruous is man!”

The following passage from a letter written in his ninetieth year, on a similar occasion, may be read in connexion with that we have just quoted. “Nothing new can be alleged to improved minds, in the way of consolation, under the afflicting dispensations of a merciful and beneficent Providence. Such know, that God doth not willingly afflict, that those he loves he chastens; that, to those who seek his protection and support, he will grant that protection and support, which the nearest and dearest friends cannot give; that he, who hath formed us for society, and established the relationships and connexions of human life, hath so constituted us, that, when we are bereaved of relatives, we must lament, and those with whom we are connected ought to participate in our grief, and endeavor to alleviate it. But it would be vain to attempt to stop its current, as vain as it would be to attempt to stop the flowing tide. The mind is employed almost entirely with reflections on the happiness it has lost, and thinks but little, if



at all, of the happiness which the object of its bereavement has gained. If this were duly considered, would it not go far to lighten the oppressed heart? It certainly would, says reason; but few there are that reason, or can reason amidst the deep gloom of grief. To use a scripture expression, the light shineth in the darkness, but the darkness comprehendeth it not."

We return to the series of letters of an early date, to give one more passage, which bears somewhat on the times.

"*November 14th, 1773.* But I cannot bid you adieu in this solemn manner. *Totus mundus agit histrionem.* The famous Jacob Bates hath lately exhibited here his most surprising feats of horsemanship, in a circus or enclosure of about one hundred and twenty feet in diameter, erected at the east end of Mr. Honyman's field. The number of spectators was from three to seven hundred. He exhibited four times, and took half a dollar for a ticket. A mountebank doctor, who lately came into America from some part of Europe (Great Britain, I believe), and who is expected here, is now haranguing daily, from a wagon, to the good gaping people of Connecticut, and, while they are gaping, he is picking their pockets. Strolling players we have had among us. I expect that, in a few years, Drury Lane and Sadler's Wells, &c., will be translated into America

“I wish, while we are encouraging the importation of the amusements, follies, and vices of Great Britain, America would encourage the introduction of her virtues, if she have any; for I am sure, by thus countenancing her follies and vices, we shall lose the little stock of virtue that is left among us. This I am very clear in, that exhibitions of players, rope-dancers, and mountebanks (I must confess, indeed, there is something manly and generous in the exhibitions of Mr. Bates; for a well-formed man, and a well-shaped, well-limbed, well-sized horse, are fine figures, and in his manage are displayed amazing strength, resolution, and activity,) have a more effectual tendency, by disembowelling the purse, and enfeebling the mind, to sap the foundations of patriotism and public virtue, than any of the yet practised efforts of a despotic ministry.\* But it will be in vain to talk against these things, while there are a hundred fools to one wise man.”

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\* Our old Congress took the same view of this matter. Mr. Ellery was absent, however, on a visit to his family, at the time the following Resolutions passed that body. They remind one of the religious and republican rigors during the civil wars of England. “*October 12th, 1778.* Whereas true religion and good morals are the only solid foundations of public liberty and happiness; Resolved, that it be, and it hereby is, earnestly recommended to the several States to take the most effectual measures for the encouragement thereof, and for the suppressing of theatrical entertainments, horse-racing,

## CHAPTER II.

*Mr. Ellery is elected to Congress. — Signs the Declaration of Independence. — His Services in the Old Congress. — Extracts from his Diary. — His Character as a Public Man.*

FROM nothing that has yet been said, could we gather that Mr. Ellery, in general estimation, was one of the foremost men in the Colony, or be led to expect, that, in a most critical period of the revolution, he would be charged with a great public trust. He had held no political or judicial office, and, probably, had not been distinguished as a jurist or merchant. But he was known to the people for his firmness, and good sense, and devotion to the public cause. And his sense of the worth of freedom could be the more relied on,

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gaming, and such other diversions as are productive of idleness, dissipation, and a general depravity of principles and manners."

"October 16th, 1778. Whereas frequenting play-houses and theatrical entertainments has a fatal tendency to divert the minds of the people from a due attention to the means necessary for the defence of their country and the preservation of their liberties; Resolved, that any person holding an office under the United States, who shall act, promote, encourage, or attend such plays, shall be deemed unworthy to hold such office, and shall be accordingly dismissed."

as it did not spring from eager sympathy with the sudden excitements of the day, but from principles which his experience and reflection had prudently developed and confirmed. It was a deep-seated passion, and a moral preference. To forward political liberty was, in his view, to follow every individual to his own home and heart with a blessing. The social state was to be sustained and amended, by interesting every man in the good of the whole as his own private good; and his country was to be the object of affection, as the protected sphere of an individual's usefulness, honor, and peace.

According to his own strong language at the time, he placed his obligations to uphold liberty, as high as those that bound him to his wife and children. Still he was no dreamer about men's rights as separated a hair-breadth even from their duties; but he was for placing man where he could best feel and do his duty. From the little that has been already stated, it is plain, that he had shown himself a public-hearted man in the first struggles of his countrymen against encroachments upon the rights of the colonies. He had been upon important committees, whose business was to procure the repeal of oppressive revenue acts, and was acquainted with active spirits in other colonies, who were preparing themselves and the people for a separation from the mother country, if that choice

should alone be left. In short, the plain man of business had inspired a general confidence in his fitness for a high civil trust, let the aspect of affairs be ever so variable and perplexing.

Mr. Ellery appeared, for the first time, as delegate of Rhode Island, in the memorable Congress of 1776. His instructions are dated May 4th of that year. He took his seat on the 14th; and, with his venerable colleague, Stephen Hopkins, set his name to the Declaration of Independence.

The personal responsibility of this measure was as clear to his mind, as if the hand of the King's officer were already upon him for the treason. But it may be said of him, as truly as of any man, that, however his temper might be softened or his opinions modified by time and religion, he never changed with his condition or duties. He looked at them fully and distinctly; he knew that he had pledged himself to a great and doubtful question; and he sustained himself equally, and always moved with a firm and cheerful spirit. He placed himself by the side of Charles Thomson, the Secretary, and observed the expression and manner of each member, as he came up to sign the Declaration. He used to describe this scene with great spirit. Its interest was wholly moral. Nothing could be less indebted to show or ceremony. He looked on intently, and with a feeling that the men were equal to the crisis.

Mr. Ellery was in Congress from 1776 to 1786, with the exception of the years 1780 and 1782. In one point of view, the station of a delegate might seem, in itself, of no inconsiderable dignity and weight; for while, in the revolt of a single city or nation, power would most likely fall into the hands of one or a few leaders, to whom all other agents would be strictly subordinate, the members of our revolutionary Congress were representatives of distinct sovereignties, and no one acknowledged a superior. Still, the points of their official weakness were numerous, so that, without personal address and influence, a delegate would be of very little consideration; and there were so many ways of exercising talent and influence, which could find no place in the history of the times, that his most meritorious services might often attract no attention.

For instance, besides advising and coöperating with his associates, he must be powerful at home, in order to bring his own State to a hearty support of the recommendations of Congress. It might be his task to contend with petty jealousies, narrow views, and political rivals among his constituents; and if he carried his point, still no fame could attach to this almost domestic agency. A trust like his required him to be fit for various business, both within the House and out of it; and he was not to think a moment of himself or his



celebrity, if he could but sustain a great, though laboring cause, and its all-provident and sorely tried leader.

The journals of Congress bear testimony to Mr. Ellery's constant employment upon some of the most important committees, and in a great variety of business; but here, too, it is often difficult to ascertain his views or services. The debates are not reported. We may read his motions, his votes, his appointments on committees and their reports; and from the kind of subjects given in charge to him, we may sometimes infer what opinion was entertained of his capacity for public business. But we must be often ignorant whether he took a leading part in regard to measures, with which his name is connected; and sometimes, where it is known that he did, his merits could not be understood, without entering more largely than would be proper here into historical details; as in the instance of the questions relating to the New Hampshire Grants, and to the recognition of that territory as a State, in which he was distinguished for his exertions in behalf of the claims of Vermont.

It will be sufficient to name one or two of the more important committees of which he was a member, and which of themselves might have given him full employment; and, as nothing is known now in relation to his services upon these,



beyond what the journals testify, perhaps even this meagre enumeration might have been spared, and the reader left to infer his public course of action from what is known of the man, the times, and the body to which he belonged.

Not long after his first election to Congress, October 11th, 1776, we find him placed upon the Marine Committee. As he came from a commercial State, whose waters and capital were for a time subjected to the enemy, and always of importance to our own resources and operations, it was to be expected that our naval affairs would be brought under his particular notice, and his attention appears to have been directed to them for a large part of the time he was in Congress. Three years afterwards, October 28th, 1779, upon a report of the Marine Committee respecting the Navy Department, a Board of Admiralty was established to superintend the naval and marine affairs of the United States, to consist of three Commissioners, not members of Congress, and two members of Congress. Mr. Ellery was elected to this Board, December 8th, 1779, and it was at the same time resolved, that all matters heretofore referred to the Marine Committee, be transmitted to the Board of Admiralty. June 23d, 1780, he was elected a Commissioner of this Board; his term as delegate having recently expired.

By a resolution of Congress, January 30th,

1777, a standing committee of five members was appointed to hear and determine upon appeals brought against sentences passed on libels in the Courts of Admiralty in the respective States ; and Messrs. Wilson, Serjeant, Ellery, Chase, and Sherman were chosen. It is needless to dwell upon the necessity of such a jurisdiction somewhere, or the difficulty of arranging a system, that would inspire confidence abroad, and yet not alarm the jealousy of the several States. These, and other points, are considered in a report by a committee of three, of which Mr. Ellery was one, March 6th, 1779.

The part he took in relation to a memorial of certain inhabitants of Bermuda is of little public importance, but appears to be somewhat illustrative of his character. Those islanders were suffering deeply from want of provisions, for which they seem to have depended upon the revolted colonies ; and to these they now came, though politically estranged, to implore relief. On the 23d of April, 1779, Mr. Ellery, as chairman of a committee to whom their memorial had been referred, reported a state of facts, and their opinion, "that, so long as Bermuda shall continue to be guarded by British ships and garrisoned by British soldiers, how powerfully soever humanity may plead in their behalf, and the disposition of Congress incline them to relieve the distresses of Ber-

muda, yet sound policy and the duty they owe to their constituents, will constrain them to refuse a compliance with the request of the memorialists." The sympathies of Congress were strongly with the islanders, and, upon the question to agree to the report, the States were divided.

Mr. Ellery was a thoroughly kind-hearted man, but, in the combat of feeling with duty, he sought to give the victory to the right side, and he was always slow to revise a carefully formed opinion. The memorial was recommitted to the same gentlemen, who reported, May 7th, "that, from a reconsideration of the deplorable circumstances of those unhappy persons who are deprived, as it hath been represented to your committee, of the means of supplying themselves with bread, which are allowed to other inhabitants who openly profess their attachment to the enemies of these States, they are of opinion" that it be recommended to certain States, which are named, to permit the exportation of corn to those Islands. Mr. Ellery did not agree with the other gentlemen of the committee in this report; for, upon a substitute being moved by Mr. Burke, and seconded by Mr. Morris, "that the memorialists be informed, that Congress deem it highly inexpedient to grant the prayer of their memorial," he voted for the substitute, which was adopted by nine States, and afterwards passed as a resolution.

For reasons before stated, it would not be worth while to insert further particulars from the journals, which would give but equally imperfect information as those already mentioned. It may not be deemed improper, however, to offer an abridged account of the proceedings in relation to a matter of some moment to the Rhode Island delegation, and which engaged a good deal of the attention of Congress. It would be gratifying to know, from full reports, what Mr. Ellery urged in defence of himself and his colleague.

May 13th, 1784, a controversy about the right of the Rhode Island delegates to their seats arose upon a Report of the Committee of Qualifications, which stated that they were elected on the first Wednesday of May, 1783; that the law of the State required the delegates to be chosen annually on the first Wednesday of May; that an act of that State, passed in 1777, empowered its delegates to represent the State in Congress until they should have due notice of their reëlection, or until delegates, appointed in their room, should take their seats in Congress, the act directing the election of delegates for one year to the contrary notwithstanding; that none of the present delegates took their seats until the 30th of June, 1783, and that by the fifth of the Articles of Confederation it is agreed, "that delegates shall be annually appointed, in such manner as the legislature

of each State shall direct, to meet in Congress on the first Monday in November in every year." Whereupon the committee were of opinion, "First, that no State has a right to empower its delegates to sit in Congress more than one year, under one appointment; and, secondly, that the year for which the said delegates of Rhode Island were appointed, had expired." On the question to agree to the first clause, it was resolved unanimously in the affirmative. The question on the second clause was lost, four States in the affirmative, two in the negative, and three divided. Mr. Ellery, it seems, contended, that the act of 1777 gave him a right, under the Confederation, to sit after a year from the time of his election had expired, so that he did not exceed the term of a year after first taking his seat in Congress.

The subject was kept before Congress, in the form of objections to the Rhode Island members' speaking, voting, &c., till the 24th of May, when the delegates of Virginia and South Carolina submitted a long statement of their views of the matter, in which they protest against the right of Mr. Ellery, and Mr. Howell, his colleague, to vote till their competency to act is declared by an affirmative vote of Congress. "Still, however," they say, "reduced, by the perseverance of Mr. Ellery and Mr. Howell, to the alternative of stopping the business of the United States at a very

critical moment, or proceeding to act with them, they have judged it most advisable to prefer the latter ; under a determination, on all questions where the interest of the Union at large, or that of the States they represent, may be materially affected, to have it stated by the yeas and nays, the manner in which they are carried ; saving to themselves, and to the States they represent, the right they may have to invalidate all acts passed in Congress, wherein the voices of Mr. Ellery and Mr. Howell are deciding on the question."

They further protest against "such acquiescence in the conduct of those gentlemen, which they deem to be irregular and unjustifiable," being considered as a precedent ; and conclude with a resolution, to the effect, that when any State shall object to the credentials of a person claiming to be a member, such credentials shall be submitted to the Committee of Qualifications, who shall report a state of facts merely ; and seven States agreeing that the credentials are sufficient, the claim shall be good ; and if seven States shall not so agree, he shall not be permitted to sit in Congress.

Mr. Howell immediately made a motion, seconded by Mr. Ellery, that the consideration of the foregoing motion be postponed in order to take up the following ; "Whereas, the question on the report of the Committee of Qualifications, on the credentials of the delegates of Rhode Island, &c.



taken and lost on the 15th instant ; and whereas, since that period, the said delegates have been continually called to order, and have not been permitted to speak or vote in Congress without interruption from some members ; Resolved, that after delegates shall have been received as members into Congress on sufficient credentials for one year, such delegates, so admitted, shall not be excluded the House, but by the voices of seven States." The question to postpone was lost, as was the question to agree to the resolution of the delegates of Virginia and South Carolina ; so the members from Rhode Island retained their seats without further molestation.

One would not have supposed, that our old legislators could find time to talk about a mere point of style. The following anecdote, however, was recalled to Mr. Ellery in 1818, by some remarks upon the Life of Patrick Henry. " I was in Congress with Mr. —, of Virginia. He undertook to ridicule New England composition, because it abounded in monosyllables. I asked him whether the motions and reports of the New England delegates were not intelligible. He said yes, but they did not sound well. Soon after, he was of a committee of which I was one, and as he was the first chosen, he draughted the report. He cautiously avoided monosyllables, and the report consisted of sonorous, sesquipedalian words,



without a connecting particle. After Secretary Thomson had read it, I stepped to him and asked him whether he understood the report? 'No; it consists of a number of long, sounding words, without any connecting ones to show its signification.' I believe the Virginians are getting into a more simple style."

Mr. Ellery was in the habit of keeping a minute diary of his journeys to and from Congress. Five of these, for three successive years, remain, and abound in particulars as to roads, distances, taverns, innholders, fare, expenses, the private houses where he had a right to claim hospitality, or at which he was compelled to seek it; and moreover one would think that every conversation he held, everybody he met, every incident that befell him, was here recorded. One or two of them have accounts appended, between him as delegate, and the State of Rhode Island, which might startle a reader who was unacquainted with the state of the currency in those days. His journeys were on horseback; and a few extracts from one of these diaries will give some idea of the travels of a member of Congress in former times.\*

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\* The Diary is entitled, "Journey from Dighton, in Massachusetts Bay, to York, in the State of Pennsylvania, begun October 20th, 1777, and concluded November 15th." He travelled in company with his son-in-law, Mr. Dana, delegate from Massachusetts.

*“October 24th.* The weather was lowering, and that, and the prospect of hearing something of the Newport Expedition, detained us at Judge Potter’s, (South Kingston.) This day, had a confirmation of the glorious news of the surrendry of the Colonel of the Queen’s Light Dragoons, [Burgoyne,] with his whole army. Learn hence, proud mortals, the ignominious end of the vain boaster. Gave a spur to S. by lettier.”

*“November 1st.* We spent the Sabbath at Hartford. In the afternoon heard Mr. Strong preach a good sermon; and most melodious singing. The psalmody was performed in all its parts, and softness, more than loudness, seemed to be the aim of the performers. In the evening, waited upon Governor Trumbull, and was pleased to find so much quickness of apprehension in so old a gentleman. Connecticut has collected and ordered taxes to the amount of one hundred thousand pounds more than she had issued. Brave spirits!

*“November 3d.* To Litchfield, where we lodged with General Wolcott, and were kindly entertained. He had lately returned from the northern army, where he commanded a number (three hundred, I think,) of volunteers, which he had collected by his influence. He gave us an account of the surrendry of “the menacing meteor, which, after a most portentous glare, had evaporated into

smoke,"\* and gave it as his opinion, that the army under General Gates, at the time of the capitulation, did not exceed twelve thousand men.

"November 5th. We intended, when we left Litchfield, to have gone to Peekskill, and there to have crossed the North River; but when we got to Danbury, were dissuaded from it by the person at whose house we breakfasted, who told us that there were Tories and horse-stealers on that road. This account, and it being so late in the forenoon that it was impossible to reach Peekskill by night, and not being able to procure a lodging in Danbury, occasioned us to take the Fishkill route. Accordingly we set off, baited at the foot of Quaker Hill, about seven miles, and reached Colonel Ludinton's, eight miles from the foregoing stage, at night. Here, *mens meminisse horret!* we were told by our landlady (the Colonel was gone to New Windsor), that there was a guard on the road between Fishkill and Peekskill, that one of the guard had been killed, about six miles off, and that a man, not long before, had been shot at on the road to Fishkill, not more than three miles from their house, and that a guard had been placed there for some time past, and had been dismissed only three days.

"We were now in a doleful pickle, not a male

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\* "See Governor Livingston's Speech to the Assembly, in a Fishkill paper."

in the nouse but F. D., his man, and W. E., and no lodging for the first and last, but in a lower room, without any shutters to the windows or locks to the doors. What was to be done? What could be done? In the first place, we fortified our stomachs with beef-steak and some strong drink, and then went to work to fortify ourselves against an attack. F. D. asked whether there were any guns in the house. Two were produced; one of them in good order. Nails were fixed over the windows, the gun placed in a corner of the room, a pistol under each of our pillows, and the hanger against the bed-post. Thus accoutred and prepared at all points, our heroes went to bed. Whether F. D. slept a wink or not, W. E. cannot say; for he was so overcome with fatigue, and his animal spirits were so solaced with the beef, &c., that every trace of fear was utterly erased from his imagination, and he slept soundly from evening till morning.

“It rained and snowed through the next day. We continued at Ludinton’s until the afternoon; when, (Nov. 6th,) the fire-wood being gone, we mounted, and set off for Adriance’s. Just as we mounted, it began to snow; however, we pushed on, and soon reached that stage, (it being but five miles,) in tolerable order. We were ushered into a room, where there was a good fire, drank a dish of tea, and were entertained during great part of

the evening with the music of the spinning-wheel and wool-cards, and the sound of the shoemaker's hammer; for Adriance had his shoemaker's bench, his wife her great wheel, and their girl her wool-cards, in the room where we sat. This might be disagreeable to your delicate macaroni gentry; but, by elevating our voices a little, we could, and did keep up conversation amidst the music; and the reflection on the advantages resulting from manufactures, joined to the good nature of our landlord and his wife, made the evening pass off very agreeably. Indeed, if the house of Adriance was more convenient than it is, I could enjoy myself there, as well as at Johnston's in Bethlehem.

“*November 7th.* Breakfasted at Adriance's, and set off for Fishkill, where we arrived at noon. Could get no provender for our horses but at the continental stables. Waited upon General Putnam, who was packing up, and just about setting off for White Plains. Chatted with him awhile, and then put off for the continental ferry at the North River. In our way to the ferry, we met President Hancock, in a sulky, escorted by one of his secretaries, and two or three other gentlemen, and one light-horseman. This escort surprised us, as it seemed inadequate to the purpose either of defence or parade. But our surprise was not of long continuance; for we had not rode far, before we met six or eight light-horsemen on

the canter, and, just as we reached the ferry, a boat arrived with as many more. These, with the light-horsemen and the gentlemen before mentioned, made up the escort of Mr. President Hancock. Who would not be a great man? I verily believe that the President, as he passes through the country thus escorted, feels a more triumphant satisfaction than the Colonel of the Queen's Regiment of Light Dragoons, attended by his whole army, and an escort of a thousand militia.

"*November 10th.* Crossed the Delaware with General Fermoy, without making ourselves known to him. From Easton, we rode in the rain to Bethlehem, for the sake of good accommodation, and were visited by Mr. Ettwein, one of the ministers of the Moravian Society, who had been so kind as to show me the public buildings when I was at Bethlehem the last June. When Congress were here in their way to York, they ordered that the house of the single women should not be occupied by the soldiery, or in any way put to the use of the army; and that as little disturbance as possible should be given to this peaceful society; which Mr. Ettwein took notice of with great gratitude. A number of sick and wounded were here, a considerable quantity of baggage, and guards; and a number of light-horse were at Nazareth, feeding on the hay and grain of the society; this I found was disagreeable to them,



but at the same time perceived that they did not choose to complain much, lest their complaints should be thought to proceed not so much from their sufferings, as from a dislike to the American cause. This people, like the Quakers, are principled against bearing arms; but are unlike them in this respect, they are not against paying such taxes as government may order them to pay for carrying on the war.

“*November 12th.* Rode to Levan’s where we lodged. The forepart of this day was filled with snow squalls, which proved peculiarly irksome to Mr. Dana’s servant, whose surtout was stolen from him the evening before, at Johnston’s, by some soldier. The afternoon was comfortable, but the evening was windy, and exceeding cold. The room in which we sat and lodged admitted the cold air at a thousand chinks, and our narrow bed had on it only a thin rug and one sheet. We went to bed almost completely dressed, but even that would not do. It was so cold that I could not sleep. Our fellow-lodgers suffered as much as we did; and, if they had read *Tristram Shandy’s* chapter of curses, and had remembered it, would have cursed our landlady through his whole catalogue of curses. What added to the infamously of this tavern, was the extreme squalidity of the rooms, beds, and every thing.

“*November 13th.* Met Mr. Samuel Adams



and Mr. John Adams about nine miles from Levan's and hard by a tavern. They turned back to the inn, where we chatted, and ate bread and butter together. They were, to my great sorrow, bound home. I could not but lament that Congress should be without their counsels, and myself without their conversation.

"*November 14th.* Crossed the Schuylkill, dined near the town of Ephrata, and lodged at Letidz, a little Moravian settlement. We lodged in clover. We slept in cabins about three feet wide. A straw-bed was at the bottom, a feather-bed on that, sheets, a thin, soft feather-bed supplied the place of blankets, and a neat calico coverlet covered all; and our lodging-room was kept warm during the night by a neat earthen stove, which in form resembled a case of drawers.

"*November 15th.* Crossed Anderson's Ferry, and in the afternoon reached Yorktown, and so finished our journey of four hundred and fifty miles."

But it is time to return to Mr. Ellery's character as a public man. To insist upon the estimation in which he was held by able men in Congress, as a claim to present respect, might betray some distrust of his merits, or a weak desire to obtain for him a traditional reputation, when positive instances of his public services could not be adduced. It is true, nevertheless, that strong

testimony was borne to the useful part he acted, by those who were fittest to judge. He had their confidence, for the same prudent, straightforward, practical view of affairs, and for the same consistent, independent, decided conduct, which would be the first things to speak of, in a general view of his mind and character. He was perfectly intelligible in word and deed ; and hence the very man to be trusted at all times, even by those who did not act with him. If men followed or avoided him, it was not from any false view they had taken, but for some distinct reasons which he, in all honesty, had given them.

Besides the respect and confidence, which his abilities and character obtained, his social spirit and powers of conversation, the wit, pleasantry, and good-humored satire, which could enliven a party of friends at their lodgings, or sweep away the fallacies and whims of members in a debate, brought him into delightful intimacy with leading men of the country, whom he met for the first time in Congress. There were times, even in the sittings of that body, when illuminating wit or confounding ridicule was needed to repress arrogance, or come in aid of sound but powerless argument ; and on one occasion of the kind an eminent delegate from Massachusetts expressed his regret most emphatically, that Mr. Ellery was not there to take the business into his hands.

The men and the times furnished him with stores of anecdotes, often as full of wisdom as of mirth, which he afterwards made free use of in conversation, and thus agreeably acquainted his young friends with less observed, but material points in the history of the period, and the habits and characters of our statesmen. These recollections we shall not venture to set down.

He was much annoyed by diffidence, in his early attempts to speak in Congress, and was always free to tell of his embarrassment and failures. When he was once congratulated upon having said the very thing, and in just the way it should be stated, he was able indeed to conceal his surprise, but never had it been greater; for it seemed to him, that, while he was up, he had known nothing, and, as might be expected, he had sat down very little satisfied with himself. But he was determined not to yield a particle to weakness or awkwardness; and in time he became, not indeed an orator, but an easy and useful debater, and always had something to say to the purpose, when he felt himself called upon.

His connexion with our Independence, and his public services in general, seem never to have dwelt much upon his mind. He was indifferent, one would have supposed, to the distinction which the mere act of signing the Declaration has been thought to confer; and as to putting forth any

claims to consideration, he could not understand the thing. Upon some allusion having been made by a correspondent, to one who had publicly vindicated his claim to be among the signers, he replied; "My name is there, and I believe in every list that has been printed. If it had not been inserted in any of them, I question whether I should have taken the same pains to establish the fact, as he has done. I should have left it to others, I believe, to prove it."

Again, in 1819, he writes; "Tell Mr. William S. Shaw, that I thank him for the volume\* he sent me. It brought to my mind transactions, *quorum pars minima fui*, and which deserved to be recorded. But I do not thank him for entertaining an opinion of me, so far above my merit. It is too late for me to write memoirs of my own times, times which tried men's souls, times in which Mr. Adams took an active part, and whose publications respecting them are now and ever will be honorable to him."

It is not known whether any of his private or official letters from Congress remain. He says, 1815, "You have discovered a large bundle of letters, written by me to your father [from Congress]. Have mercy upon them. I was a whig

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\* "Novanglus and Massachusettensis; together with Mr. John Adams's Letters to Mr. Tudor"

then. Now I am called a tory. They must not be shown to any one. I am afraid they are full of fire.\* I am glad to find, that, having passed through many fiery trials, I am now happy in my tranquil apartment, with but little of the inflammability, which my whiggism excited; but still a staunch friend to political liberty, and that liberty with which the Gospel has made us free."

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\* These letters were afterwards destroyed, in consequence of his request to his friends, that none of his correspondence should be preserved. In the general destruction of his own papers at the same period, it is not known how the letters, ~~works~~ and journals, used in this memoir, escaped

## CHAPTER III.

*Withdraws Himself from Public Life. — His Writings. — His Opinions on various Topics. — Habits in his declining Years. — His Death. — Remarks on his Character.*

MR. ELLERY left Congress and public life for ever, at the close of 1785. In common with others, he had suffered losses during the war. His dwelling-house had been burnt by the enemy, and his family driven into the interior. The resources of a profitable profession had been cut off, and the current of trade and wealth turned from his native town. And at the age of nearly sixty, he had yet to provide for his children, and, under circumstances almost disheartening, to begin life again as a man of business.

In April, 1786, he was elected by Congress Commissioner of the Continental Loan-Office for the State of Rhode Island ; and, upon the adoption of the Federal Constitution, 1790, he was appointed Collector of the Customs for the District of Newport. This office he held till his death.

During the period of embarrassment and agitation, arising from a depreciated currency, from opposition to the new Constitution, and sympathy with revolutionary France, he contributed largely



to the journals of the day, without his name, in behalf of order, public faith, and an efficient government. His writings attracted much attention, and, as might be expected, involved him in the party hostilities of the time. He could not well avoid giving offence, but he never allowed himself to be disturbed by the assaults he provoked, and to some extent he had the satisfaction of seeing his object accomplished. For many years before his death he abstained wholly from the press, and from taking any active part in politics; not even attending town meetings. And though he was charged with abusing his influence to put down an administration, that "kept him in office and gave him his bread," or, as it was sometimes said, by whose favor "he had become rich;" yet, in a private memorandum, he says; "To all this and many more lies printed in that paper, Job answered not a word."

It remains to speak of him in his closing years. It may be supposed, that we are entering upon a distinct era, in which, though he may be still recognised, he must yet be materially changed; that his course must be henceforth downward; and that, with the general feeling of tenderness and veneration for the old, we have now only to observe the decay of what we may have admired in its strength. Such an anticipation, with respect to the aged, is so common, as to be thought natural. But, after all that has been written of old



age, is its true value, and the character it may and ought to possess, enough considered? Some speak of a man in years as an object of condescending admiration, that he should have lived so long; and he, in turn, may be pleased with this distinction, and even live the longer for it, as if to protract and augment the honor.

Sometimes, we make old age picturesque, with its wintry snows and reposing apathy. The harvest is ended, the earth is sealed; there is to be no more growth. Or it is a noble pile, time-honored, time-worn, and falling into slow decay. There is to be no more splendor or cheerfulness, no more of life as it has been, within those walls. Or, again, we make old age sentimental. It is passively and gratefully receiving cheerful tendance from the young; it is patiently recounting its experience, and distilling its long-treasured wisdom; and the children are gathered round the bed of the patriarch for his blessing. And are these the best lights and positions in which we may look on those, who are approaching the appointed boundaries of time?

There is yet another view of age, in which it appears as a highly moral and intellectual state of man. It may be granted that the senses have lost much of their quickness; but the imagination, now freed from distracting excitement, is as able and disposed as ever to shape anew the materials

they have supplied, either for its own solace and delight, or for the more beautiful expression of thought and emotion. At the very season when mere animal existence is less a blessing, and the animal spirits have almost ceased to excite and sustain, and passion is no longer to stimulate and crave and be fed, the imagination still lives to animate the purely intellectual exercises, to preserve or restore the early love of natural beauty, to keep the affections warm and old remembrances distinct ; and indeed to give the mind much of the light and vivacity of youth.

It is the period of acquisition, as well as of contemplation. A long experience of life has not yet furnished all, nor the best, that can be obtained. Reflection shows that much has been falsely valued, and that the methods of pursuit have often been wrong ; so that even a little that is seen and meditated upon in the later day, may be worth more than masses of crude opinions, fancies, and purposes, which occupied the supposed vigor of life. The mind was often stationary then, from the all-surrounding pressure of outward things, which seemed to make it intensely active, because they wholly engrossed it ; but now it may be truly said to be advancing by a power from within. The effort is not merely to keep what has been purchased, and not to recede from a point that has been gained. Life is better even now

than a mere resistance of evils. The future is entered upon as offering higher studies, and as a corrector of the past, and with a religious feeling of the importance of the days that remain, as close-bordering on the endless pursuits of another state of action. The temper is softened and spiritualized. Active engagements are still pursued for the good of others, when the motives of self have become feeble. Intimacy with the young is cherished from sympathy with their exuberant spirits, and from a desire to be strengthened by their fresh-growing thoughts, and from a prophetic interest in the life that is before them; an intimacy of perfect equality, except that the aged bend to the young, and give more than they receive. Add to such considerations as these, the blessing of a good nervous system, and health scarcely interrupted or impaired to the end, and some idea may be formed of Mr. Ellery in his closing years.

An imperfect view of his course of life, and the direction of his thoughts during this period, may be had from some passages in his letters. They are taken from a correspondence begun, when he was past eighty, with a young relative, and continued with unabated spirit to the last month of his life.

“*May 6th, 1811.* I feel disposed to gratify your wishes in every respect; but I have not time.

were I capable, to write a *discourse* on old age. The comfort of old age doth not depend upon the refined speculations of Cicero; much less on the stern, unaccommodating, inhuman system of Zeno. It depends, (I wish I could say it by experience,) in one word, upon conformity to the will of God. The means of reaching it, under God, are temperance, moderate exercise in the open air, going to bed and getting up early, sound sleep, and equanimity.

“I do not think, notwithstanding the afflictive dispensations of Providence in the loss of friends, and the diseases and irritability to which old age is frequently subject, that it is so undesirable a condition as some have represented it to be. I speak for myself, and of my present state. What it will be, God only knows. As to employment of time, I have experienced such instruction and delight in reading, and investigating truth, that I mean, as long as my mind is capable of bearing it, to keep it in exercise, and doze as little as possible. Blessed be the man who invented printing. For this important art, I am thankful to that gracious Being from whom all our blessings flow.

“There are, who think that the miseries of life are greater than its joys. I am not one of them. When I consider the numerous objects, which our beneficent Creator has formed, and how nicely they are contrived and adapted to please our

senses and our appetites ; the pleasure that may be derived from investigating their internal structure and final causes ; the discoveries which natural philosophy has made and is making ; the improvements in arts and advances in sciences, and in the philosophy of the mind ; the profit and delight which attend reading and social conversation ; and compare the sources of pleasure, which kind Providence has furnished, to entertain and instruct us in our pilgrimage, with the miseries of life ; as well as my short views of either will admit, it appears to me that the latter are but just enough to constitute this a probationary state, a *palæstra* to prepare us, by the exercise of virtue and piety, for a mode of existence in which they, who act according to the will of God, will enjoy uncontrasted and eternal felicity."

Of his views on many disputed points of theology, perhaps no one can speak with perfect confidence ; and to call him by the name of any sect of Christians would probably describe very inadequately his entire, individual belief. He regularly worshipped with Congregationalists, but was never connected with a church. He studied the Bible diligently and reverently, and acquainted himself with the opinions and reasons of hostile theologians. He sought the views, especially, of Christians of any name, whose minds seemed to be under the true influence of religion, or who ex-

pressed rather how they were moved by their own study of divine truth, than how they were instructed or accustomed to believe.

He was a sincere advocate of religious freedom and of a spirit of charity ; and felt no uneasiness about controversy, so long as inquiry was left perfectly open, and diversity of opinion was unattended by a defaming, persecuting zeal. " I believe," said he, " if party names were entirely disused, there would be more harmony among Christians. With too many, when a religious treatise is offered to their perusal, the first question is, Who wrote it? and, that answered, the next is, Is the author a Calvinist, an Arminian, Socinian, Arian, &c.? And if the writer be of different sentiments from the person to whom the book is presented, or be branded with an opprobrious name, it is either refused a reading, or read with such prejudice as to render it useless, or worse than useless, to the bigoted reader. I heard a sensible minister of the gospel inveigh, in a sermon, against the *Hopkinsians*, as he called them, in such a bitter manner, that I dare say one half, at least, of his congregation, would have avoided any writing of Dr. Hopkins, as they would a most venomous serpent. And yet I don't in the least doubt that this same minister, if he had heard the first Episcopal clergyman in Newport declare from the pulpit, that the breath of a Dissenter was infectious, would have severely reprobated it."



No more particular statement need be made of his political sentiments, than that he was a whig of the Revolution, and a federalist of Washington's times. A passage may be inserted to show what he thought of Napoleon, at a period (1812) when, even in this country, his course was regarded with very differing opinions and hopes.

“Notwithstanding the encouraging account Lord Cathcart has given, I should not be surprised to hear that Bonaparte was in possession of Petersburg. The superiority he has over the Russians, both in the number of his soldiers and the skill of his officers, will, I am afraid, overcome their obstinate resistance to his progress. I wish I may be mistaken, and that Heaven may put a hook in his jaws and draw him back, confounded with disgrace, and the overthrow of his immense army. How long this dreadful scourge will be suffered to lay waste and destroy, the Lord only knoweth. It is matter of consolation, and even of joy, that the Lord reigneth.”

Again, in 1814. “The important news from France has excited in me high exultation. But while I rejoice, I cannot but feel some anxiety about the event of the last struggle for empire the Leviathan will make. The conflict must be violent on which such vast events depend. He must either preserve his dominion, or submit to such terms as the victorious allies shall please to



grant him. What an alternative for a creature whose ambition is insatiable! I feel such indignation against this monster, that I could almost say; *Satia teipsum sanguine quem sitisti*. But it would be more Christian-like to contemplate the amazing events, which Providence in a few years has produced, and to leave vengeance to that Being whose offspring we all are, to whom vengeance belongs, and who is as merciful as he is just, than to judge others or indulge a spirit of revenge."

He had a religious abhorrence of war, and indeed an aversion to fierce contentions of all kinds. He cherished this feeling and expressed it, and observed, with great interest, the efforts that were making in his later days for the abolition of wars. "Peace and liberty," said he, "are the great objects of my delight. Such a reformation in the morals of the nations as will put an end to war, appears to me to be distant. Eighteen hundred years have passed away since the birth of Jesus, and still it seems that two thirds of our race are, and have been long, involved in the grossest idolatry, superstition, and stupidity; and what length of time it will take, according to experience, to eradicate bad habits and plant and establish good ones, may be worth considering. However gradual may be the growth of Christian knowledge and moral reformation, yet, unless it be begun,

unless the seeds are planted, there can be no tree of knowledge, and, of course, no fruit. The attempt to Christianize the heathen world, and to produce peace on earth and good-will towards men, is humane, Christian, and sublime; and, if persevered in, will, I don't doubt, in due time be successful."

Mr. Ellery, as Chairman of a Committee of Congress, (October, 1783,) reported the following resolution in honor of his fellow-citizen, General Greene; "That two pieces of the field ordnance taken from the British army at the Cowpens, Augusta, or Eutaw, be presented by the Commander-in-chief of the armies of the United States to Major-General Greene, as a public testimonial of the wisdom, fortitude, and military skill, which distinguished his command in the Southern department," &c., with a memorandum to be engraved thereon to the effect of the resolution. In 1813, another of his fellow-citizens and a townsman achieved a memorable naval victory; and Mr Ellery expressed but the universal feeling, when he said, "Captain Perry's exploit on Lake Erie is glorious." But neither pride in his native State, nor gratitude for the services of warriors, could reconcile him to the modern style of applauding military prowess and skill. Had age and retirement, and love of peace, made him view such things differently from what he had done as a

public man in 1783? Or was there a simplicity in the honors he had offered to Greene, at variance with our later methods of distinguishing warlike exploits?

“I don’t like,” said he, “puffing, boasting, swelling language, inflated and towering encomiums; nor hanging many swords about our brave navy officers. It would make them look too much like French *petits maîtres*, with a dozen watches and their glittering chains suspended about them. The Greeks and Romans did not so honor their heroes. It did not require numerous committees to invent new decorations for the illustrious achievements of their gallant officers. Their honorary badges, though simple, uniform, and cheap, were as great a stimulus to ambition, and as highly valued by victors, as any that modern refinement has invented. It would indeed seem, that in our large towns the contest is, which of them shall excel in costly exhibitions of applause; which excites a silly emulation among them, and I should think would be to a warrior of laudable ambition, rather an object of ridicule than an incentive to glory. To provide for the support of those, who are disabled in fighting for their country, and for the families of those who fall in battle, is humane and beneficent, and therefore ought to be the principal object in making collections on account of victories obtained; but it

seems in some places that what is collected is to be expended first in honoring the hero, and the remainder in the beneficent manner mentioned. The republican spirit with which we set out is, in every respect, almost entirely lost in imitating the refinements, the fashions, of the old countries in Europe."

After receiving some account of a distinguished foreigner, who was residing here, he says; "I never had the pleasure of being in company with him. I recollect to have read, in Mr. Walsh's Review, the piece you say he wrote. I should like to hear him talk. His love of children enunciates a softness of heart. His love of flowers does not indicate a fine taste, although it be not incompatible with it. I know some girls, who are very fond of plants, whose taste is not highly refined. Perhaps he views them with a philosophic eye. But how he can reconcile his inattention to dress with that attention, (if I may be allowed the expression,) which nature has manifested in the formation and decoration of flowers, I don't know. There is something naturally or affectedly singular in many men of genius; and some philosophers, as well as poets, have shown an offensive disregard to their personal appearance. Perhaps, by contrasting a slovenly exterior with the exact order of their superior faculties and endowments of mind they think to exalt our opinion of the latter

They reverse the description which, according to Milton, Adam gave of Eve; 'in outward show elaborate, of inward, less exact.' "

A few passages are added, relating wholly to his employments. "I should have answered your letter sooner, but I have been much engaged in fitting out a hired revenue cutter, on her second cruise, and in contracting for the building of a permanent cutter here for this station. Besides this and some official business, I have this winter read two vast volumes, containing sermons of Isaac Barrow; also Stewart's Philosophical Essays, and some light pieces. The first work treats its subjects in the fullest and most comprehensive manner, and I do not regret the time I spent in reading it. The Philosophical Essays require almost too much attention for my old head, but they please me. I am about to read Calvin's Institutes. I think I can read books of theology without being over-influenced by names. What appears to me to be right I shall embrace, and reject the chaff and stubble."

"I wish my eyes would admit my writing or reading in the evening; but I am thankful that they still will allow me to write or read in the day-time without much difficulty. In the evening I take my post as usual in the southwest corner of the parlor, while N. occupies the northwest angle, sometimes working, sometimes read-

ing We seldom see company in that part of our day, so that I have abundant time for reflecting on what has passed the preceding part of the day, and on what is to be done the next, &c. &c.; and for recollecting and reflecting on the past scenes of my life. Many of them were highly pleasing, and by frequently calling them up, my conception of them continues still vivid, and I cherish the remembrance of them with great delight. I wish they were all of this color."

"I wish I were not compelled to write so many official letters; I then could write oftener and with less interruption to my friends. I wish your office were as frequently visited by clients as my house is by applicants of various sorts, and for various purposes; and that I could hear their hardships and complaints with your patience. I get rid of them as well as I can; and commonly, when they find fault with the laws, I refer them to the Legislature; and if I can convince them, that I am governed by the laws, without censuring those who made them, I think myself well off. A Collector's office is a very troublesome one, and if it did not furnish me and my children with the necessaries of life, I would resign it at once."

"I have business enough to take up much of my time; the rest I give to reading. Indeed, my almost only idle time, if the time of sleep can be called so, is in bed. To that I repair about



nine, and leave it about five. So goes away my time ; but not without thoughts of my existence, when time shall be swallowed up by eternity *Vive et floresce.*"

Thus uniform and serene was his life ; cheerful, employed, and heaven-directed. If home is the natural retreat of age, he did not seek it for indolent repose, and because he abhorred the public walk. He had the faculty of making himself happy within doors. He would keep there through the winter, if it were severe ; and with his books near him he would read and talk without any flagging of spirits ; and when the spring came, he would recommence his slow walks abroad, looking just the same as when he had shut himself up. In the summer clouds, the ocean, the country, the soft air, and his little garden, he seemed to find increase of delight. The opening of the year was delicious to him ; and with it came the words of Milton to Hartlib, as if they were a part of the season itself, or at least of his own ever-returning sensation. "In those vernal seasons of the year, when the air is calm and pleasant, it were an injury and sullenness against nature not to go out and see her riches, and partake in her rejoicing with Heaven and earth." His regular and simple habits, his moderate exercise when the days were pleasant, and his prudent seclusion in winter, with his never-



failing employments, carried him along from year to year, with little perceptible diminution of vigor, and none of spirits, or memory, or mental force.

Thus it was with him till about eighteen months before his death, when he speaks of suffering at times from "strange rheumatic paroxysms." And from the following passage in a letter, dated March 30th, 1819, he seems to be put on his guard by the warnings of age. "I received the Doctor's letter with his recipe, for which I returned him my hearty thanks; but I have not yet taken any part of the medicine he prescribed. For, although I can easily recommend medicines to others, nothing but pressing necessity can bring me to take them myself; and at present I am tolerably well, and expect that, when the warm weather comes, my health will be restored. March has, as long as I can remember, been a trying month to the bodies of men; and the last, although the weather has been variable, has yet been unusually cold. I have been particularly careful of myself, and mean to be so the whole of the spring. But there is no fence or guard that can secure us against the infirmities of old age. They must come, and it is our duty to bear them with patience, and not murmur at the condition on which long life is held."

His letter of January 22d, 1820, the last in the series from which extracts have just been

made, is in the clear, compact hand of his early days, and marked with his usual affection, humor, and attention to minute concerns of himself and of others. He had a little before ordered the purchase of Pascal's "Provincial Letters," with a caution that he wanted only the original; and he now requests, that Fenelon's "Directions for the Conscience of a King" should be sent. He says, however, that the rheumatic affection still afflicts him at times, and that his hands are so feeble that he is obliged to use a little copy of Virgil, from which he cites several verses that bore upon some point of prosody.

On Thursday, February 10th, the pain in his arm suddenly increased, attended with alarming symptoms; and, at the close of the week, his strength was fast sinking. He could no longer read; but a recent publication, about which he felt much curiosity, was read to him on Friday, and he listened with great interest, and spoke of the work the next day. On Monday his clergyman was with him an hour, and, though very feeble, he conversed a great deal, in his usual manner, on various subjects. They spoke of the prospect of death, and he said it was an event which for two years he had been fully prepared for, and even desired. Tuesday morning he rose and partly dressed himself, but was so weak as to be obliged to lie down again immedi-

ately. The physician found his pulse almost gone. Wine was given, and he seemed to revive. The Doctor said, "Your pulse beats very well." "Charmingly," he replied ; but it was a last effort of nature. He then lay in silence, except saying once, that he knew he was dying, and in two hours he expired, February 15th, 1820, in the ninety-third year of his age.

In person he was of moderate height, with large, well-formed head and features. His countenance was thoughtful and attentive, his utterance slow and impressive, and his step measured and firm. His dress was of the plainest sort, but becoming his years, and just so far conformed to modern style as to show that he was free from eccentricity, and observant of what was passing, and yet sufficiently wedded to old usages not wholly to surrender a regard to comfort. His manners were cordial and delicate, with less of formality than was commonly seen in our ancestors of the highest class.

An attempt has here been made to give some account of one of our public men of the last century. Very little has been insisted upon as constituting the prominent qualities of his character, or the leading principles of his conduct ; but, for the most part, the reader has been left to estimate his powers, motives, and general cast of mind, as he would do those of one who, to a certain extent,

had been brought under his own observation. Little has been said of him in his private relations; and there were points in his intellectual character, which could not be known clearly but to those, who were personally acquainted with him. A few recollections of him are added, as he appeared in advanced age, and which are chiefly illustrative of a studious and contemplative mind, moved and directed by religious principle.

The first thing to be observed is, that his character was not the growth of an originally well-ordered spirit, or of ~~inborn~~ meekness, nor shaped by propitious ~~circumstances~~ in his outward condition. It bore the marks of habitual self-inspection and self-resistance. And, from his own account, this discipline was not very seriously commenced till somewhat late in life. The most signal triumph in this warfare was over pride in all its forms and directions. Humility was the virtue, which he seemed to prize as the most comprehensive and most productive. The contest was not chiefly against thinking highly of himself in comparison with others; for he was not accustomed to make such comparisons. His effort was to bring every thought and desire into subjection before God, and to find security and motive in a fixed sense of his deficiencies and his obligations. It is not easy to give an idea of the influence of this constant study of humility. It

was his light and strength. It cleared and simplified the purpose of human life. It gave him more and more the command of his faculties, and the exercise of his affections, and the power of devoting himself to duty. It enabled him to moderate his expectations, to meet events without surprise, and to value what was good to its height. It showed him of how little worth are too many of our favorite objects, how ignorantly we estimate calamities, on what false principles men are commonly pronounced great, and how monstrous is arrogance or oppression in a mortal.

This moral warfare, though strict and unremitting, never threw an air of constraint or austerity upon his intercourse with others, as is sometimes the case with men the most conscientious, but of weak minds or morbid dispositions, who dread the approach of sin the moment they fall into the natural current of their affections. His whole manner was marked with decision, composure, and ease. It seemed as if his spirits were kept elastic by his constant guard over them, and that he became more truly what nature had formed him to be, by what some might call his resistance of nature. His very kindness and gentleness had none of the inertness of mere good temper, but were animated by an active, cherished principle of love, which discriminated its objects and was all alive for the happiness of another. With the ut-

most variety in his familiar conversation, one never felt, that in its transitions, its mirth, its gravity, the tone of his mind was undergoing great changes, and that he was putting off one character to assume another. The elements were mingled and the same spirit prevailed. In the midst of important reflections and occupations, he could amuse himself with a certain perception of the ludicrous, or descend to what passes for levity ; and yet the feeling of reverence or seriousness was not lessened in himself or others. Without confounding things, he made no false rule of separating those, which he could not find to be hostile

As moral motives and restraints increase intellectual power, we may ascribe to these in part his activity of mind to the last day of his long life, as well as the constant employment which he imposed upon himself as a duty. He held himself responsible for the right application of his powers and means for the acquisition of wisdom ; taking the word in its widest sense. He did not call one mental exercise an amusement, and another a study, to indicate that one only was useful and involved obligation ; but, in the lighter and severer occupations of his life, he sought equally to keep in mind, that he was to do or obtain some good.

In the pursuit of truth, he seemed more anxious for the certainty, than the amount or variety of results. It was no evidence, however, that he



thought he had attained to certainty, because he gave over farther study of a subject. For, though reluctant to leave a point unsettled and own that it was beyond his power, yet he could believe, that, as to himself at least, the bounds of knowledge were set, and thus it became a duty to acquiesce even in ignorance. He was not fond of indulging in conjectures, that he might fill the void where he had in vain looked for satisfying truth ; nor was he unhappy because of the uncertainties, which cannot be cleared up in an imperfect state of being.

His method of investigating subjects was to follow them into their minutest particulars and relations ; not at all to exercise his ingenuity or amuse a speculative turn of mind, but because it gratified his curiosity ; and, moreover, patient examination was necessary for him to arrive at results, which some appear to command by instant inspection ; or, at any rate, the strength of his convictions depended upon his seeing the whole ground. He could refine and discriminate without being visionary, or undecided, or taking only partial views ; and, if he was fond of particulars, he did not stop at them. There was something almost characteristic in his good judgment, his reasonable way of looking at any subject, and assisting others to find out what they should think and do in any doubtful case. No one after con-



sulting him would say, How original are his opinions, how shrewd, unexpected, or oracular. It appeared rather as if both parties had been deliberately passing over some familiar ground and recalling their experience, than carefully judging of something wholly new ; so calm and well-weighed were his thoughts, and so connected and complete the consideration he gave to the matter.

His feelings, and wishes, and every extraneous or accidental circumstance, were as if they did not exist, in his sober-minded search of truth. Or rather, the very influences, that are most apt to mislead, did but sound the alarm to him to be single-hearted ; and his power of discerning was only made the keener, if he had the least apprehension that his examination might be crossed by any thing foreign to the subject before him. Thus, as an adviser, he not only inspired confidence and threw light upon the present question, but indirectly he taught one the true mode of inquiry whenever he should be in doubt. He had the plainest common sense, and the most prudent judgment in common affairs ; and not so much from having lived long in the world, as from his right temper of mind and his habit of going far into the reason of things.

Still there was often something in his method of pursuing truth, or defending a position, or treating the opinions of another, which, to one not

well acquainted with him, might argue unfairness or unreasonableness. This was particularly the case when he was amusing himself with the efforts of his antagonist, or seeing how many aspects a subject might have to different minds, especially if disturbed by opposition. He loved, when he found a man easily satisfied with his own views of a subject, to state, in the most innocent manner possible, some difficulties which he had himself encountered, and saw no way to overcome, and probably deemed invincible. Thus a vulgar error, perhaps, or some established phrase or saying, which appeared to him to have no meaning, and yet led others to think that in using it they said and meant a great deal, was unexpectedly brought into suspicion ; and topics of a far graver character were seen to have difficulties, which had escaped a careless eye, or a too easy faith. To arrest another's mind suddenly by verbal distinctions or fatal doubts is not commonly thought to be a very amiable mode of manifesting a love of truth ; but in him it was exceedingly amusing, and always of service to others. The most vexatious point in his character as a disputant was, that he would not be prevailed upon to say distinctly that he was defeated. But a man is not always convinced because he has no more to say ; and some might be rash enough to think that a principle was overthrown, because its advocate had surrendered.

He was, no doubt, thought by many to be a man of strong prejudices, and to take pleasure in differing from others ; both from his tenacity where he had once made up his mind, and from his reluctance to receive what was current, or reprobate what was not, till he had looked into it himself. Many would charge him with holding opinions because he did not condemn them, or of rejecting them when he was only on the search. As soon as one came to understand him and his methods of proceeding, the utmost confidence was felt in the faithfulness of his inquiries, and the sincerity of his convictions. Besides, it was seen, that he did not expect or wish others to adopt opinions as his. On the contrary, while you admired the complacency of his own assurance, you knew that it was only to be gained for yourself by examination as fair and thorough as his ; no matter whither your inquiry might lead you. He would not think the worse of you for coming to a different result from himself ; and he cared nothing for a man's agreeing with him, unless he saw that he did so from the work, which his own mind had done. How was truth to be helped by the multitude of witnesses repeating each other ?

This honesty or fairness of his mind was its great distinction, and an explanation of his character. It was a proof of his moral and intellectual vigor. It was the fruit of a victory in which

we could see what had been resisted. It was a religious principle. It ran through all his studies and experience, restraining him from injustice, and compelling him to condemn injustice ; opening the way through ancient errors of whatever kind, and for the admission of light from whatever quarter ; and making it absolutely impossible that he should be a partisan or idolater in any thing.

He was not anxious to proclaim his sentiments. He could enjoy them by himself. It was a great point to be satisfied in his own mind, and this was a duty that he and every man owed to himself. It brought serenity, and gave motive and confidence to further research. As the minds of men were so variously constituted, the declaration of his private judgments might be of little moment. It was of far greater importance to put others upon doing, what none can do for them ; procuring the peace and assurance of an intelligent faith in all things. And as his own mental habits and state were the result of discipline, he was taught forbearance. He knew the difficulties of truth, and the warring principles in man ; and if himself immovable, he yet judged not others. For a man of decided character, he was remarkably gentle and unreprieving.

His kindness and warmth of affection may be seen in his intercourse with his young connexions

They were not sent to him to learn wisdom, nor did he court them, and seek to increase his honors by the number of his youthful disciples. There was no outward fascination, and nothing unusual in his modes of life. A plain man in years, living in retirement, and obtruding his wishes and opinions upon no one, drew the young to him as if he were their dependence; and they felt that they owed to him, not only some of their best-remembered seasons of pleasure, but, in no small degree, the direction and coloring of their thoughts.

He was connected with their minds, not as a sage authority to be recalled to sanction an opinion, or as a repository of doctrines from which they were to draw; for in any new train of reflections, which they could not possibly trace to him, his image was likely to be revived, his probable view of the subject to be suggested, his provoking objections, his moderate approval, his pretended misconception, and his sincere interest. He was not their teacher, but their elder companion. He never talked to them about himself, unless the subject or some pertinent story made it unavoidable; and this abstemiousness on a point, where the old are apt to be self-indulgent, was owing to his good taste and his preference of other matter, and not to his being for ever on his guard against the common infirmity of age.

The desire to serve them, though uppermost in his mind, had little or nothing to do with the terms on which they met ; and it was so with his paternal love for them, which never interfered with their coming together as equals. Not, however, that there was a treaty or secret understanding, that for the time there was to be no dignity on one side and no deference on the other ; but because all thought of form was lost in perfect kindness of feeling, and in the satisfaction of talking freely, and getting all the good and pleasure possible from observing the processes of youthful minds, and listening to the experience and matured judgments of an elder one. And even here it was observable, that, with all his experience and maturity, his conversation was far from being a repetition of some old lesson of life ; for his mind was freshly exercised upon the immediate topic, and his thoughts, however ripened, had every mark of recentness.

He had no anxiety to conceal from the young his imperfections and mistakes, and certainly no wish to pass for more than he was worth. This was not the way to make them value truth, or understand human life, or do justice to his opinions or advice. He was without reserve on all points where he thought his experience could do them any good. If they were engaged in studies that were little familiar to him, he would do what



he could to keep company with them, and encourage them to talk about any thing that occupied them, and invite them in their turn to enter with him into his own favorite inquiries, so that nothing should separate them or weaken their intimacy.

He would read the new literary works they praised, however uncongenial they might be with his early and abiding preferences, and sometimes show very little respect to the passages they admired, till it seemed to be growing a matter of serious difference ; but it ended with amusing explanations or concessions ; and perhaps they had been taught, however roughly, that such was their own way of using those, who differed from them on the all-important questions of taste. His own line of active duties presented little for a letter or conversation, and was accordingly but little spoken of ; but their engagements always offered something for inquiry, encouragement, sympathy, or advice ; and when he saw any thing to blame, he spoke plainly and earnestly, and suffered no weakness of affection to conceal or impair the force of what he thought it his duty to say. If they neglected his admonitions and disappointed his expectations, his regret was unmingled with selfishness, and his affection unabated. They might need it the more.

The great charm of this familiar intercourse



with him may be found in the naturalness of his character and manners. His society gave one the feeling of home ; and when separated from him, a letter or the remembrance of him was like restoring one to his home. All his experience of men, his studies, his sufferings, his settled devotional feeling, his decided tone of sentiment, his deliberate consideration of subjects, and his weight of years, impaired not in the least the frankness, the humor, the simplicity of his conversation, or his power of self-forgetfulness, and of entering heartily into whatever belonged to the present moment.

It will not be thought strange, then, that in his death he should have been mourned more than the young ; and that even at this late day, in attempting to speak of him as a public man, the private, domestic interest of former years has so clung to me, that I have felt much more as if I were with him at his fireside, than relating the rattle that is known of his active life.





<sup>The good</sup>  
of whom we read, that man rich in mercy  
is also rich in wisdom, & rich in power. He says  
riches will be his when we come to Heaven, as  
far as ~~the riches of this world~~ concerns can Eden-  
riched with gr. Rich wisdom will contrive or  
wellfare. Rich power effect it. - rich in my dis-  
-tribut. I send we may complain of poverty,  
but ye first monument of a City at its birth, it  
we become incircled & involved with riches,  
we by this are not seen, ear has not heard, & many  
of us cannot conceive. Can you conceive  
that there is any poverty in that city of God  
ye gaze whereof are peac, & yd streets w/consf  
are pure gold? No, but how vast ye riches of  
that city are, you cannot conceive; nor call  
ye thought of Angels themselves relate!

16.0 3.215703.5

While I was preaching at a private fast (kept for  
a possessed young woman,) - on mark  
9. 28, 29. - ye Devil on ye Damsel  
flew upon mee, & tore ye Leaf, as  
it is now torn, over against yr Text;  
Nov. 29. 1692.

Common Mather.

**L I F E**  
**OF**  
**COTTON MATHER;**

**BY**  
**WILLIAM B. O. PEABODY**



# COTTON MATHER.

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## CHAPTER I.

*The Mather Family. — Early Education of Cotton Mather. — He enters Harvard College. — His Studious Habits and Religious Impressions. — His Prayers and Fasts. — His “Essays to do Good.” — Settled in the Ministry as a Colleague with his Father. — His Rules of Preaching, and Manner of discharging Parochial Duties. — Singular Meditations and Ejaculations, to which he was accustomed.*

“UNDER this stone lies Richard Mather,  
Who had a son greater than his father,  
And eke a grandson greater than either.”

This ancient epitaph is introduced, not on account of its poetical merits, but because it describes the priestly succession of this remarkable family, which bore a distinguished part in the early history of New England. The scale of reputation, which it contains, probably assigns to each one of those commemorated the rank



which he deserves, at least so far as natural ability is concerned.

Richard Mather was a Non-conformist divine, who became an exile for the sake of truth and freedom, and emigrated to America in 1635. The year after his arrival, he was invited to become the pastor of the church in Dorchester, where he resided till his death. He is not described as remarkable for talent, but as possessing a weight of character and knowledge of ecclesiastical affairs, which gave him great influence in his day. He also sustained the less enviable reputation of an able controvertist, whose services were called for on more than one occasion. Our fathers were good judges of intellectual and practical ability; and, though we have not many means of judging for ourselves, we may safely believe that his high reputation was deserved.

The name of Increase Mather, the third son of Richard, is, as the epitaph declares, more distinguished than that of his father. He began to preach the year after leaving college, and soon after sailed for England, where his brother Samuel lived, in great favor with the ruling powers, till the time of the Restoration, when he was one of the ejected "two thousand." Increase Mather was strongly urged to remain in England; but he rejected all offers, which re

quired him to renounce his principles, "choosing rather to trust God's providence than to violate the tranquillity of his own mind," and after an absence of four years he returned to his own country. In 1664 he was ordained pastor of the North Church in Boston. He was twice chosen President of Harvard College. The first time, in 1681, his church refused to part with him, on any conditions; but in 1684, when the office was again offered him, he accepted with a stipulation that he should retain his relation to his people. He retired from the station in 1701, when an act of the General Court was passed, requiring the President to live at Cambridge. His son thought that this law was aimed at him by his enemies; but other authorities say, and probably with sufficient reason, that he resigned on account of infirmity and age.

Increase Mather was engaged in public services, not usual with members of his profession; these were high and honorable, and will be noticed in their proper place. His character needs to be drawn, in order to show under what influences Cotton Mather came forward in life. Increase Mather was a man of great energy and practical good sense, with an intellect clear and strong, but not adventurous, and a heart that was equal to all duties and dangers. Formed under the teaching of one, who became an exile for

the sake of conscience, and having himself been tried and tempted in those changing times, he had all the devotion of the "prophets old," together with a leaning toward severity and gloom. As a preacher, he was powerful and fervent, with more regard to manner than was usual; and such was his conviction of the degeneracy of the times, that all his sermons were filled with that plaintive lamentation for the decline of religion, which always finds audience in the heart.

It is curious to see his representations of the state of society in his day. He says that drunkenness, tavern-haunting, sabbath-breaking, and neglect of public and domestic worship, together with all kindred transgressions, had become common in New England. Unfortunately he regarded the growing liberality of the age, not perhaps as one of its sins, but certainly as one of its dangers; he cried out against toleration, as the instrument which Satan was employing to root out every vestige of religion; but, by a fortunate and honorable inconsistency, his heart being better than his maxims, he extended liberality further than some who thought it a duty. Though he had his trials when he lived, and often suffered from the jealousy of others and the want of a sufficient support, there was no man of his age, who was more honored when living, or more lamented when he died.

The good sense and sound judgment, for which Increase Mather was renowned and trusted, were the very qualities in which his son was most notoriously wanting; but this was a defect of which Cotton Mather was not likely to be conscious, and he was often perplexed to account for the little confidence that was felt in him, and the little reverence that was paid him. For many years he was associated with his father in the pastoral office, and he seems to have been greatly admired for his talents and learning; but the confidence of the people, and the honors of public trust, were prizes that he never was able to gain. He was well aware, that his father could bear no comparison with himself in point of genius and attainments; nor could he conceive why one, not equal to himself in these respects, should stand so much higher in the general esteem.

It was not, however, to Cotton Mather's own deficiencies alone that his want of influence was owing; other causes were at work to deprive the clergy of that ascendancy, which they had held for many years. In the days of persecution for conscience' sake, the pastor of the church the leader of their devotions, stood in a different relation to his people. His business then was to defend, rather than to lead the flock; to set them an example of fortitude, patience, and in-

flexible resistance to all authority, which attempted to enslave their souls. The qualities required for such a duty were all of the bold and commanding sort, and ordinary men did not covet a distinction to which they knew that they were not equal. But, when those times passed away, and peaceful virtues were required for the sacred office, the political influence of the clergy naturally lessened. Power was intrusted to other hands; a change which seemed to them humiliating, though it was, in fact, placing them on the ground, where their own usefulness and duty required them to stand.

There was a sufficient reason, then, why Cotton Mather should not inherit his father's political influence; because the days of such influence had passed by, and Increase Mather was the last who was permitted to hold it in his hands. And even he, venerated as he was, retained it more from habit than any other reason; the people had been taught to confide in him, and therefore continued to make him an exception to the general rule of his profession. Cotton Mather does not appear to have understood the change which was going on in the public mind, and he therefore ascribed to the ill-will of his enemies, that which they had little power to do.

COTTON MATHER was born in Boston, February 12th, 1662-3. His mother was Maria

daughter of the celebrated John Cotton, a man whose praise has been in all the churches, though there is some reason to doubt, whether he deserved the whole of his renown. To show respect to his memory, Increase Mather gave the name of Cotton to his son.

This account of his parentage is enough to show what his expectations were likely to be. Inheriting the name and profession of two such men, he could see no cause why he should not stand as high as they did in the public esteem. But, for the reasons just given, this was impossible ; and it was not surprising, that this perpetual disappointment should have affected his view of men and things. He must be censured with forbearance and reserve ; for there are very few who, in the same situation, would not have felt deeply wounded. Many, doubtless, would have kept the feeling more to themselves, knowing how little sympathy it awakens ; but Cotton Mather made no secret of his mind and heart ; whatever his emotions were, he expressed them with freedom, and did not always select the most favorable and timely occasions

It is impossible to deny, that the reputation of Cotton Mather has declined of late years. In his own age, he was looked on as a wonder, not so much on account of his talent and industry, as for his extensive attainments His talents



were of a high order, and his energy and method in seizing and using every moment of time for some purpose of improvement are alone sufficient to show, that he was not an ordinary man. The attainments in which he delighted were not all of the most valuable kind; but it must be remembered, they were approved by the prevailing taste, and made him a subject of universal envy and applause. He is said to have known more of the history of New England than any other man; but it is now discovered, that his facts and dates are not to be relied on. Characters are drawn by him with great partiality, and all his representations more or less colored by his own likings and aversions.

The greatest stain upon his memory is the part, which he took in the memorable witchcraft delusion. This matter is not wholly explained; but enough appears to show, that the prevailing frenzy was owing in some measure, at least, to his influence and exertion. His father set his face against those ferocious proceedings. Many others of the clergy, also, though they believed in witchcraft, were entirely opposed to the hasty convictions and cruel executions of the accused. But he, without seeming to have a full confidence in the goodness of his cause, does appear to have urged others on to lengths, to which he would himself have been afraid and ashamed to



go. His writings on the subject show a willingness to excite the passions of others, together with a desire to keep apart from the prosecutions, which, taken in connexion with subsequent avowals, seem to prove, that he was not convinced that his course was honorable.

The account of his education and early life, given by his biographers, is but meagre. This, however, is no great loss; for the incidents commonly set down to fill this page of a great man's history are poor indications of character, and are more apt to show how much the writer was pressed for materials, than what the subject of his memoir was likely to be. We might naturally expect to find Cotton Mather manifesting an early passion for books and learning, and in this we are not disappointed. He was educated at the free school in Boston, first by Mr. Benjamin Thompson, a man, we are assured, "of great learning and wit"; and afterwards by the famous Mr. Ezekiel Cheever, whose memory has descended to our own times, and who, in addition to his other qualifications, had the advantage of some experience in his profession, which he followed for seventy years. His studies in preparation for college were more extensive, than was usual at that day; since we hear of his studying Homer and Isocrates, besides many Lat-

in authors, which were not very familiar, even to those who had taken a degree.

He entered college at the age of twelve, which was then thought very early, and certainly is too early both for the pursuits and temptations of the place. But he seems to have had a strong ambition, which aided his better principles, in securing him from moral dangers, and making him attentive to his duties. He wished and expected to be a great man; and though expectations of this kind are not often shared by others in his case, on account of his birth, they were thought appropriate and graceful. When he became a member of the institution, Dr. Hoar, who was then president, gave him according to custom, "this head for his initial declamation";

*"Telemacho veniet, vivat modo, fortior ætas."*

We have little information concerning his rank in college; but, judging from its close, it must have been sufficiently high; for, when he took his first degree, President Oakes, in his Latin oration at the commencement, expressed himself in a strain, which may be thus translated.

"Mather is named Cotton Mather. What a name! But my hearers, I confess, I am wrong; I should have said what names! I shall say nothing of his reverend father, since I dare not praise him to his face; but should he resemble and represent his venerable grandfathers, John

Cotton and Richard Mather, in piety, learning, elegance of mind, solid judgment, prudence, and wisdom, he will bear away the palm; and I trust that in this youth, Cotton and Mather will be united and flourish again."

Such an address, on such an occasion, would now make a considerable sensation. The effect of it was to fan the flame of Mather's ambition, and so to make him what all expected him to be. But it doubtless had another effect, which was to produce much of that jealousy in others, and that discontent in himself, which brought so much unhappiness on his later years. Some poet of the day alluded to what he called his "ominous name";

"Where two great names their sanctuary take,  
And in a third combined a greater make."

Being blessed, as his son informs us, "with a modest inquisitiveness," a gift which is said not to be uncommon in New England, he made rapid advances before taking his second degree, which he received from the hand of his father. The *Thesis*, which he then maintained, was "the divine origin of the Hebrew points"; but he afterwards saw reason to change his mind, and held the contrary opinion to the last.

Such a man as Increase Mather would not regard learning and intellectual accomplishments as so important as religious education. His first

efforts, therefore, were directed to the formation of a Christian character in his son, who had sufficient fervor and readiness to receive impressions, and wanted the judicious counsel, which his father was well able to give. We are told, that almost as soon as he began to speak he began to pray, and practised this duty constantly in all his earlier years. He often composed forms for his schoolmates, and recommended the duty to them. He frequently reprov'd them for profaneness and misconduct, and set them the example of avowing his religious principles fearlessly on all proper occasions; a kind of moral courage, which, if it were more generally found in the young, would save many from ruin; for the truth is, that many are led away, not merely against their judgment, but actually against their will, for the want of firmness to bear up under the ridicule of those, whose good opinion they would not value.

It is clear from the history of his emotions at this time, that he needed judicious treatment like that of his father; for his spirit was one that might easily have been kindled with enthusiasm, and thus have been a firebrand to the churches. He was early, as his son assures us, 'brought by some miscarriages into inquiry into his spiritual estate. He found very frequent returns of doubts and fears, and frequently renewed his closure with Jesus Christ, as his only relief against them.'

While he was oppressed with a sense of his villainess, his father took the occasion to point out to him, as the chief beauty of religion, the welcome which it gives to the repenting, whom it receives as readily as if they had never wandered. By clear illustrations he explained the subject to him in such a manner, that the formation of his religious character was not left to the imagination.

When he was fifteen, he was much affected by reading Dr. Hall's "Treatise on Meditation," which advises the reader to proceed methodically in the performance of this duty. Probably this advice was never more faithfully regarded than by Cotton Mather. He made many attempts to form a perfectly logical system of meditation, and wrote a treatise on the subject, which was highly regarded by his friends. There cannot be much doubt of its originality, as the reader will see from a description. He first proceeded doctrinally, with answering a question, explaining a scripture, and considering the causes, effects, adjuncts, opposites, and resemblances of the subject of his reflections. In the second place, he proceeded practically, first with an examination of himself, next an expostulation with himself, and lastly, a resolution in the strength of grace offered in the new covenant. His biographer calls this a happy way of preaching *with* and to himself. Whatever the religious effect may have been, it would not

be easy to find any thing more illustrative of his peculiar character, and at the same time of the taste of the age.

At the age of fourteen he began that system of prayer and fasting, which he afterwards carried quite as far as nature could sustain it. In his day, men had become skeptical as to the obligation and effect of abstaining from food ; not so with him. He was ambitious rather to resemble a Rabbi mentioned in the Talmud, whose face was black by reason of his fastings. His son in his funeral sermon remarks, that the fasts observed by his father amounted to about four hundred and fifty, and proceeds to fortify his assertion, by saying, that "he thought himself starved, unless he fasted once a month ;" he often kept weekly fasts, sometimes two in the week. Once, in the latter part of his life, he was resolved to abstain from food for three days together, and "to spend the time in knocking at the door of heaven." The character of the first day was confession and contrition. The character of the second day was resignation to the will of God, in which, says his biographer, "he found astonishing entertainment" ; the character of the third day was request. He himself declares, that the fast had a happy effect on his mind. On one occasion, it seems to have affected his nervous system. He says that heaven seemed open to him, so that he longed to die ;



he was hardly able to bear the ecstasies of divine love. They exhausted him ; they made him faint ; they were insupportable, and he was obliged to withdraw from them, lest the raptures should make him swoon away.

It is not surprising, that these observances, so early begun and so steadily pursued, should have had an effect on his character, inclining him to grasp at every thing, which seemed like an emanation from the invisible world.

At the age of sixteen he made the Christian profession. He considered this service as binding him to efficient self-examination ; and some exercises which he wrote at this age, show his peculiar sense of this duty. The language is certainly overstrained and excessive ; apparently not so much meant to express his feelings, as to state a standard to which his feelings must be brought to conform. This view of “ things as they ought to be, not as they were,” runs through a great proportion of his writings.

But there was another duty to which he believed himself bound by his Christian profession ; it was usefulness ; doing good as he had opportunity. He was deeply impressed with a sense of this obligation, and there is reason to suppose that he regarded it. He began by instructing his brothers and sisters, exhorting the domestics, and doing them every service in his power. As he



grew older, he extended his aims and endeavors. As his principles and maxims on this subject were embodied in his well-known *Essays to do Good*, it will not be out of place to give some account of that performance now.

In this work, which was highly approved by Dr. Franklin, he endeavors to show the various ways and relations in which good may be done, and to prove, that it is the only sure process by which we can secure good for ourselves. He says, that there is a "scorbutic and spontaneous lassitude in the minds of men, which, while it sometimes prevents their being active in evil, is also the cause of their doing so little good." His object is to remove it, by showing the various reasons they have for being active in usefulness, and to point out to them the ways in which their energy can be exerted without waste of power. But he expresses a prophetic anticipation, that fields of action, which were then unimagined, would afterwards be opened. "A vast variety of new ways to do good will be lit upon; paths, which no fowl of the best flight at noble designs has yet known. and which the vulture's most piercing eye hath not seen, and where loins of the strongest resolution have never passed."

He suggests the expediency of resorting to the principle of association, to accomplish by the authority and force of numbers, what individuals

are unable to do. There is reason to think, that this suggestion, though not new, was adopted to some extent, in consequence of his recommendation ; and thus was established the system, which now operates throughout our country. His plan was to have associations formed in every neighborhood, which should keep an eye upon all growing evils, and use the most effectual means to suppress them. They were to extend their oversight even to personal and domestic relations, and, if they saw any man violating or neglecting his duty, were to offer him their friendly warnings. They were also to reconcile dissensions, and search out and relieve distress.

But after he has sketched the plan of such associations, and painted in glowing terms the good they are able to do, he thinks it necessary to caution their members, not to expect gratitude at the hands of men. "When such societies have done all the good they can, and nothing but good, and walk on in more unspotted brightness than that of the moon in heaven, let them look to be maligned and libelled as a set of scoundrels." This is not very encouraging, and hardly consists with Scripture ; "Who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good ?" He was one of those unlucky persons, who, from want of discrimination, would mortally offend those whom he was most desirous to serve

He subjoins to this work a list of desirable objects, which such societies should keep in view. The first is, the communication of the gospel to other nations. He says, however, that "till the temple be cleansed, there will be no gathering of the nations to worship in it ; and there will be danger that many persons, active in such societies, will be more intent on propagating their own little forms, fancies, and interests, than the more weighty matters of the gospel." He also proposes sending Bibles, Psalters, and other works, among the nations, translated into the various languages of the world. He recommends soldiers and sailors as proper subjects of instruction, believing that the moral character of those professions may be much exalted. He also points out the tradesman's library as a source of moral influence, and proposes institutions for teaching the young the elements of religious duty.

On the whole, he takes a comprehensive view of a subject, which was not then familiar as it now is to the public mind, disfigured only by complaints of human ingratitude, which are not particularly graceful, in those who profess to act on motives not connected with the present world.

While he was thus ambitious to be useful, even in his early childhood, there were some traits in his goodness peculiar to himself. Among other things we are told, that he thought it his duty to

devote to Melchizedek a tenth part of all that was afforded him. It is not easy to tell precisely what was the nature of this appropriation; but it illustrates character, and that is sufficient for the present purpose. There were other instances in which he had some remarkable proofs of the truth of the maxim, that virtue is its own reward. He calls them "the retaliating dispensations of heaven towards him." "I can tell," he says, "that the Lord has most notably, in many instances, retaliated my dutifulness to my father. As now, I was the owner of a watch, which I was fond of for the variety of motions in it. I saw my father took a fancy to it, and I made a present of it unto him, with some thoughts, that, as it was but a piece of due gratitude unto such a parent, so I should not go without a recompense. Quickly after this there came to me a gentlewoman, from whom I had no reason to expect so much as a visit. But in her visit, she, to my surprise, prayed me to accept, as a present from her, a watch, which was indeed preferable to that with which I had parted. I resolved hereupon to stir up dutifulness to parents, in myself and others, more than ever." His exhortations would probably have taken effect, if children could have looked forward to an immediate payment in kind; but when acts of favor were attended with such retaliations, it did not require any remarkable self-sacrifice to do them

At another time he bought a Spanish Indian servant, and afterwards bestowed him on his father. Some years after, a knight, whom he had laid under obligations, bestowed a Spanish Indian servant upon him.

For the seven years after leaving college, Cotton Mather engaged in the business of instruction, chiefly in preparing students for college. He had some under his care, older than himself. He carried them through the various branches of academic learning, including some which would now hardly be embraced in preparatory studies. He heard their recitations every day in the originals both of the Old and New Testaments, giving particular attention to the Hebrew. But he considered these attainments quite inferior to others, and therefore labored most assiduously to instruct them in the principles of religious duty. He endeavored to turn every incident and every lecture into an occasion for giving this kind of instruction, which practice, his son assures us, had a good effect upon his readiness and wit, and had a happy influence on the young men.

There is no doubt that his fervor and his strong passion for learning must have inspired similar desires in his pupils. Many of them became eminent and useful men. He used sometimes to say, that he "would give all that he was worth in the world, for the measures of grace and sense, which

he saw in some that were once his scholars." He no doubt believed what he said; but it shows his simplicity not to perceive the line where humility borders on affectation. But it was said, because he had imposed upon himself; not because he had any desire to impose upon others.

Cotton Mather, the heir of two such ecclesiastical names, could of course be destined to no other profession than the ministry; but there was a difficulty in his way not easily overcome, which was, an uncommon impediment in his speech, with which he was troubled from his early years. His son says, that the evil was made more tolerable by the circumstance, that Moses, Paul, Virgil, and Boyle were stammerers before him; and to have such great and good companions in adversity must have been a great relief. However this may have been, he did wisely to follow the advice of "that good old schoolmaster, Mr. Corlet," who called on purpose to advise him; saying, that he must accustom himself to a "dilated deliberation" in public speaking; for, as in singing no one stammers, so by prolonging his pronunciation he might get a habit of speaking without hesitation. This advice was followed, and with perfect success.

He had for some time given up all thoughts of the ministry on account of this defect; but, when he was thus taught to surmount it, he abandoned his medical studies, in which he had become



deeply engaged ; and, after having given the attention to theology which was then thought necessary, he prepared for his public appearance. In so doing he did what probably would not have been thought of by others ; “on account of the calling he had relinquished, he did, in his first sermon, consider our Saviour as the glorious physician of souls.”

“Nachmanides,” says Samuel Mather, “was styled Rabbi at eighteen years of age ;” and Cotton Mather deserved the title at the same age ; for at this age he distinguished himself and began to teach ; for in August, 1680, he first preached for his grandfather in Dorchester, the Sabbath after for his father in Boston, and on the succeeding Sabbath in his grandfather’s desk in Boston. The North Church turned their attention to him at once as a proper person to associate with his father, and in February, 1680, gave him a unanimous invitation. It would not be easy now, to invite a preacher in February, who preached the first time in August of the same year ; but this was in the days when the New Style was not adopted.

It does not appear what the terms of this invitation were ; it could not have been to become a colleague with his father ; for this offer was accepted, and yet it was not till January, 1682, that they invited him to become their pastor. He for



some time declined complying for various reasons ; one was, that his father was in full strength, and did not need a colleague ; another was, his low estimation of his own powers ; and we are told, that, whenever he read the text, " They watch for your souls as those who must give an account," the words " caused an earthquake within him."

Before he accepted the trust that was offered, he kept many days of fasting and prayer. At last, having made up his mind, he was ordained May 13th, 1684, when Mr. Allen, Mr. Willard, and his father, imposed hands on him, and he received from the celebrated Eliot the fellowship of the churches. Some portion of the scruples, which prevented his acceding to the wishes of the society before, rested upon the subject of ordination. To satisfy himself, he examined the Fathers of the first three centuries, and at last determined that the choice of the people was essential to the validity of that service. Truly, there are not many now, of any sect, who, even without examining the Fathers, would hesitate to adopt his conclusions.

This congregational principle does not appear to have been carried to its full extent, even by those who considered it as most important. In the year 1697, the church of which the Mathers were pastors, voted, " a letter of admonition to the church in Charlestown, for betraying the lib

erties of the churches, by putting into the hands of the whole inhabitants, the choice of a minister." Cotton Mather says, that many people would not allow the church any priority of right in the choice of a pastor. Sometimes the church made choice of several pastors, from whom the congregation selected one; a mode which seems only to have answered the purpose of securing the authority of the church in name, since it gave to the inhabitants generally all the substantial power. It is plain enough to every one who reads our history, that, in political matters, the people were jealously careful to retain all rights and powers within their own control, if not in their own hands; and this circumstance would serve to show, that they considered ecclesiastical powers quite as much their own, and never to be surrendered, where it was important to insist upon them.

At the time of entering upon his duties, he was conscientious and apprehensive; and a passage in his *Diary* \* shows in a curious manner, what were his temptations, and the means employed to resist them. He writes, "The apprehension of cursed pride, the sin of young ministers, working

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\* During many years of his life, Cotton Mather kept a *Diary*, in which personal incidents and opinions were often minutely entered. This *Diary* is now scattered in different places. It has been examined, and much use made of it, in drawing up the present memoir.

in my heart, filled me with inexpressible bitterness and confusion before the Lord. In my early youth, even when others of my age are playing in the streets, I preached unto very great assemblies, and found strange respects among the people of God. I feared, and thanks be to God that he ever struck me with such a fear, lest a snare and a pit were by Satan prepared for such a novice. I resolved, therefore, that I would set apart a day, to humble myself before God for the pride of my heart, and entreat that by his grace I may be delivered from that sin, and the wrath to which I may, by that sin, be exposed."

In the account given of the exercises of that day, he contrives to award himself a considerable portion of praise. He states with great honesty the reasons he had for self-applause, but he says, that "proud thoughts fly-blow'd his best performances." In order to take down his self-exalting spirit, he taxes his invention for hard names to apply to himself by way of humiliation. He says, that he is "viler than a beast"; "unsavory salt, fit for nothing but the dunghill." His son gives the passage at great length, thinking that, as he had found it beneficial to himself, it might be so to others, especially of the sacred order. It is valuable as a remarkable specimen of self-delusion, in which he reminds himself constantly of his own "grandeurs," as he calls them, in the same tone

that the rich man uses when he professes himself to be poor, a profession which he will thank no one for believing.

His rules of preaching were systematic, in some respects more so than was necessary. They serve to show the man and his habits of mind. When he was at a loss for a text, "he would make a prayer to the Holy Spirit of Christ, as well to find a text for him as to handle it"; which seems to be carrying the principle of dependence quite as far as it should go. He never undertook to treat a subject, without carefully examining the text in the original languages, and consulting all commentators concerning it. He always chose his subjects with a view, not to the display of his own resources, but to the edification of his hearers. He studied variety in his topics and illustrations, bringing scriptural quotations to bear on every part, and endeavoring "to fill his hour well."

So far as respected manner, he was careful not to be too fast nor too loud, writing in short sentences, so that every hearer could easily grasp his meaning. He always made use of notes in preaching, though he was not enslaved by them. In this he differed from his father, who, with all his various and laborious duties, imposed on himself the labor of writing his sermons and committing them to memory; a process which shows his

ideas of faithfulness in his duty. In general, very little would be gained by this preparation; it would not have the effect of extemporaneous speaking; but there are some men, who, by having some such support to lean upon, can address audiences in words suggested by the occasion, throw out new thoughts and illustrations as they arise, and give to these efforts the finish of studied, together with the fervor of extemporaneous speaking.

It may be as well to give, in this place, an account of the plan on which he proceeded in order to make himself useful in his profession. He took a list of all the members of his church, "and, in his secret prayers, resolved that he would go over the catalogue, by parcels, upon his knees, and pray for the most suitable blessings he could think of, to be bestowed on each person by name distinctly mentioned." He also endeavored "to procure an exact account of those evil humors, of which the place where he lived was at any time under the dominion; and, whereas those devils could only be cast out by fasting and prayer, to set apart a day of secret prayer and fasting for each of them."

His ideas of the amount of visiting, required in the discharge of duty, show that it was not expected from a clergyman in that day to have frequent intercourse with his people. He devoted

one and sometimes two afternoons in the week to that purpose, sending word beforehand to the families that he intended to visit them. It was not, however, a familiar visit, so much as a religious exhortation, when he inquired particularly into the religious feelings of each member of the family, and gave them the counsel which they seemed to require. "He could seldom despatch more than four or five families in an afternoon," and he looked on this work as one of his most difficult labors. Dr. Palfrey, in his Sermon on the history of the Church in Brattle Square, remarks that Dr. Colman extolled Cooper for "knowing where to find the sick and poor of the society when they sent their notes." It should be remembered, that congregations then thought it necessary to have two clergymen, one of whom was called pastor, the other teacher, though their duties were the same.

His son tells us, that "his love to his church was very flaming." He often kept a fast with special reference to its wants and welfare, and then, though there were about four hundred connected with it, he would pray for each one of them by name. Before his evening prayers, he would ask himself, Which hath shown me any kindness? And he would supplicate heavenly blessings on each one that had obliged him. He did not limit his prayers to his friends, but endeavored



to keep his mind in a proper state toward his enemies ; but in this endeavor he appears to have been less successful, if the style of his controversy truly represents his feelings.

He was certainly solicitous to be useful, and spared neither labor nor expense in promoting the spiritual good of his people. What subsistence was allowed him by his people does not appear. His father suffered much from poverty at times, which might have been owing to his accepting the agency abroad ; a trust in which the agent was thought sufficiently recompensed by its honors. Cotton Mather was constantly employed in distributing religious books among his people. We are assured by good authority, that he sometimes gave away more than a thousand a year, and this at a time when such works were more ponderous than they are now, and the cheap inventions of modern times were entirely unknown.

The disposition to derive improvement from all circumstances, for himself and others, attended him through life ; and though it was always sincere, it did not always manifest itself in the most judicious and edifying manner. He determined early in life to let no suggestion pass by him, and many, which most men would never have thought of turning to purposes of instruction, were welcomed as excitements of devotion in his soul.

When the common business of the household



was going on, he was led into spiritual meditations. If they happened to be brewing, he would say, "Lord, let us find in a glorious Christ a provision for our thirsty souls;" when baking, "Lord, let a glorious Christ be the bread of life unto us;" and on the washing-day, which is not apt to bring the mind into a devotional frame, he would say, "O, wash us thoroughly from sin! O, take away our filthy garments from us." These ejaculations were provided and used on all such occasions.

So in all his personal actions. Late in his life he writes in his Diary: "The snuffing of my candle is a frequent action with me. I have provided a great number of pertinent wishes and thoughts, and prayers and praises, to be formed upon the occurrences in my life, which afford occasions for them." It must have been by an oversight that this action was so long omitted. For all his mature life he had been accustomed, when he wound up his watch, to bless God for another day, and pray that it might be spent to his glory. When he heard a clock strike, he would pray that he might so number his days, as to apply his heart unto wisdom. When he knocked at a door, he used it as an occasion for reviving the memory of the promise, "Knock, and it shall be opened unto you." When he mended his fire, it was with a prayer that his love and zeal might be kindled into a flame. When he put out his candle on

retiring to rest at night, it was with an address to the Father of lights, that his light might not go out in darkness. When he paid a debt, he reflected, that he should owe no man any thing but love.

He bore upon his mind a great number of ejaculatory prayers, prepared for the occasions when they were to be used. As a specimen, those which were sometimes used at table may be given. Looking on the gentlewoman that carved for the guests, he said to himself, "Lord, carve a rich portion of thy graces and comforts to that person." Looking on a gentlewoman stricken in years, "Lord, adorn that person with the virtues which thou prescribest for aged women." For one lately married, "Lord, marry and espouse that person to thyself in a covenant never to be forgotten." For a gentlewoman very beautiful, "Lord, give that person an humble mind, and let her be most concerned for those ornaments that are of great price in thy sight."

So when he walked the streets, he implored secret blessings upon those, who passed by him. At the sight of a tall man, he said, "Lord, give that man high attainments in Christianity." For a lame man, "Lord, help that man to walk uprightly." For a negro, "Lord, wash that poor soul; make him white by the washing of thy spirit." For a very little man, "Lord, bestow great blessings on that man." For young gentle-

women, "Lord, make them wise virgins, and as polished stones in thy temple." For a man going by without observing him, "Lord, I pray thee, help that man to take a due notice of Christ." For a very old man, "Lord, make him an old disciple." For a wicked man, "Lord, rescue that poor man, who, it is to be feared, is possessed by Satan, who leads him captive."

When he had a family, he taught his children, in like manner to use the incidents of life as so many suggestions from on high. Some years after this he writes ; "Two of my children have been newly scorched with gunpowder, wherein, though they have received a merciful deliverance, yet they undergo a smart that is considerable. I must improve this occasion to inculcate lessons of piety upon them ; especially with relation to their danger of everlasting burnings."

## CHAPTER II.

*Marriage of Cotton Mather. — Character of his Son, Samuel Mather. — Mode of instructing and governing his Children. — Sir Edmund Andros. — Increase Mather. — Sir William Phips. — Cotton Mather's Agency in promoting the Delusions of Witchcraft.*

IN his twenty-fourth year, Cotton Mather thought it advisable to marry; not being moved to that step by a partiality for any particular person, but by more general considerations relating to his usefulness in life. "He first looked up to Heaven for direction, and then asked counsel of his friends." Having thus commenced where most men end, he looked around for some suitable person on whom to fix his affections. The person, whom he selected to be the object of this passionate attachment, was the daughter of Colonel Phillips of Charles-town, and to her he was married shortly after. It is recorded of her by Samuel Mather, with somewhat faint praise, that "she was a comely, ingenious woman, and an agreeable consort;" but he might have enlarged upon her merits without seeming too partial. Her husband evidently had reason to bless the hour

in which he formed the connexion. By this lady he had nine children, of which but one survived him.

Samuel Mather, who afterwards officiated as his biographer, was one of two children by a second wife. He was a man very sparingly endowed with talent, but with something of his father's taste for a certain kind of learning. As for the monument, which he erected to his father's memory, no one can read it without lamenting that he had not left that pious office to other hands. It is a proof of his filial reverence and affection, but it does him no honor in any other point of view. It is chiefly remarkable for its resolute silence in regard to all those peculiarities of habit, character, feeling, and domestic life, which his relation to the subject of the memoir gave him the best opportunity to know. He seems to have admired nothing in his father, not even his industry, energy, and various learning, so much as the fasts, vigils, and other forms which he so religiously observed. As a specimen of the work, it may be mentioned, that the whole history of witchcraft is despatched in a couple of pages; and, as if to show that this was not an intentional silence to save his father's memory, he gives the history of inoculation, by far the most honorable passage in his father's life, in somewhat less than six lines. Those, who are interested to know

something of Cotton Mather, consult the book with a perpetual feeling of disappointment, and unfeigned sorrow that he had not left it to some other writer. In the business of educating his children, Cotton Mather was far more judicious than could have been expected from a man of his peculiar temperament, and certainly deserves great credit for acting on a system, which was entirely opposed to the prevailing theory and practice. His son, who had the best opportunities of knowing, says that he was zealous against "the slavish way of education carried on with raving, kicking, and scourging; he looked upon it as a dreadful judgment of God upon the world."

He believed that children were alive to principles of reason and honor at a much earlier period of life than is generally supposed. He endeavored, first of all, to convince them of his own affection, and in that way, to lead them to the belief that to follow his judgment was the best way to secure their own good. He impressed upon them, that it was shameful to do wrong; and, when one of his children had offended, his first punishment was, to express his astonishment that the child could do any thing so unworthy. Removal from his presence was his ordinary punishment, and it was only in extreme and peculiar cases that he ever inflicted a blow. He rewarded obedience by teaching them some curious piece



of knowledge, which he had always at command; and thus, beside giving the immediate recompense of good conduct, he conveyed the impression, that to gain instruction was not a hardship, but a privilege and reward. His earliest attempt at intellectual education consisted in entertaining his children with stories, generally selected from the Scriptures. He hardly ever rose from table without some such effort to excite reflection in young minds. He also sought opportunities to teach moral lessons, showing them the duty of being kind to each other, and warmly applauding them when they had obeyed the law of love. He taught them to write at an earlier age, and in a less formal way, than is usual, and thus enabled them to record for themselves many things, which it was important for them to remember. If they deserved censure, he would forbid their reading and writing; a prohibition which was strongly associated in their minds with degradation. All this was well-judged; and it is very doubtful if such cases were often to be found in those days, when parental discipline was generally conducted more in the spirit of fear than love.

Though he was deeply interested in having his children governed by principles of reason and honor, he did not rely on those impulses alone. He led their minds as early as possible to religious thoughts and contemplations; giving them views



of religion, which were as solemn as possible, but taking care to make them sensible of the goodness of God. He often told them of the good angels, whose office it was to protect them, and who ought never to be offended by misconduct or neglect. "He would not say much to them about the evil angels, because he would not have them entertain any frightful fancies about the apparitions of devils; but yet he would briefly let them know that there are devils, who tempt them to wickedness, who are glad when they do wickedly, and who may get leave of God to kill them for it." But his chief aim was to give them a spirit of prayer, and to lead them to make known their wants and cares to his father and their father, to his God and their God.

The troubles in which New England was involved with the mother country began the year after Cotton Mather's ordination. At the close of 1686 Sir Edmund Andros made his appearance with a commission as governor, and from the beginning showed a determination to push his authority quite as far as it would go. A sentiment, too, had been expressed by Dudley, the president of the Council, which tended to alarm the free spirit of New England. He said, that the colonists must not think, that they could carry the privileges of Englishmen with them to the ends of the world. There was a deep and growing excitement it was plain that

usurpation must at length be resisted ; but no one could tell where or in what form the explosion was most likely to come.

The clergy had, from the peculiar construction of the state, been allowed a great ascendancy in public affairs, and had been consulted on all great occasions. When Charles the Second, in 1683, demanded an unconditional surrender of the charter of Massachusetts, Increase Mather, at the request of the authorities, appeared in a meeting of citizens, who were met to deliberate concerning a compliance with that demand. He exhorted them to resist it by all the means in their power ; not to rush into ruin with their eyes open, but to resolve, that if they must be undone, it should be by the tyranny of others, and not their own folly. This spirited advice prevailed. "The clergy," says Hutchinson, "turned the scale for the last time ;" probably there never was a time when their influence was exerted more to their own honor or the advantage of their country. It was one of those acts and counsels, from which oppression should have taken warning.

When Andros first came to New England, he concealed his true character ; and, though the charter was forfeited, there was no very general sentiment against him. But he soon began to show a disposition to encroach upon the rights of the people, in some instances, for purposes of extortion, in

others, simply to make them feel his power. One of his first proceedings was, to restrain the liberty of the press, and Randolph, who was universally detested, was appointed licenser of publications. An alteration also was made in the regulations respecting marriage, by which the parties were obliged to enter into bonds with sureties, to the governor, to be forfeited in case that any impediment should afterwards appear.

The Congregational clergy were regarded as mere laymen ; and by this exaction, it was contemplated to provide for the support of the Episcopal ministers, who were to be introduced. At this time there was no Episcopal church in Massachusetts, and hardly a society ; but the people were threatened with having their meeting-houses taken from them, and worship in the congregational forms suppressed by law. After a time these apprehensions were quieted for a moment by James's declaration in favor of toleration ; but, when they saw cause to suspect that this was preparing the way for the Roman Catholic religion, the alarm was greater than ever.

Besides these greater causes of uneasiness, there was a general irritation occasioned by exorbitant fees, and other similar exactions. The governor, with a few of his creatures in the Council, laid whatever taxes they thought proper ; and, as if these sources of revenue were not sufficient, they maintained that all titles to land were invalidated by the

loss of the charter, and required holders of estates to take out a patent from them, for whatever consideration they thought proper to demand.

On account of Increase Mather's agency in preventing the surrender of the charter, and the great influence which he possessed, which it was well known would be exerted to prevent a tame submission to wrongs, Randolph, who was the most active of the cabal that surrounded the governor, attempted to ruin Dr. Mather with the government, thinking it impossible to bring him into suspicion with the people. Randolph professed to have intercepted a letter from Dr. Mather to a person in Amsterdam, containing many passages likely to exasperate men in power, and showed it to Sir Lionel Jenkins, secretary of state. He treated it with perfect contempt, so that the stratagem was defeated. When Dr. Mather heard of the attempt, he immediately declared, that the letter was a forgery, executed either by Randolph or his brother. Randolph brought an action for defamation against the Doctor, in which he did not succeed ; but, some time after, by some perversion of justice, the same action being brought again, Dr. Mather kept concealed to avoid the service of the writ, knowing that, in those days, right would avail but little in a contest with power.

Some of the chief men of the colony, governed by a feeling of loyalty, hoped that their grievances

were unauthorized by the King, and that redress might be obtained by a direct appeal to the throne. Dr. Mather was selected as their agent, and as the service of Randolph's writ would have prevented the expedition, he was taken on board the ship at night, and in disguise, by some members of his society. During all these proceedings, Cotton Mather was associated in interest and feeling with his father, and some passages in his Diary show how deeply he laid these things to heart. On one occasion, he says, that he rose at night, and threw himself upon the floor of his study, in tears, praying for his country, and that he was assured of the happy result of all these troubles by a sign from Heaven.

Dr. Mather sailed for England in April, 1688. In April of the succeeding year, the report of the landing of the Prince of Orange reached this country, and shortly after came a copy of his Proclamation, which was brought from Virginia by a gentleman, who was imprisoned for the crime. Nothing was, or could be known of William's success; and doubtless the prudent course would have been to wait till the event was known, since, if he succeeded, there would be no need of revolution in New England, and, if he failed, all concerned in such a revolution must have suffered for treason. But by one of those sudden and unaccountable impulses, which are sometimes given to

the public mind, the people rose, seized and imprisoned the governor and some of his associates, and recalled the old magistrates to authority till something could be learned from England. The people came in from the country in great numbers, and insisted upon it, that the governor should be put in irons. To satisfy them, he was confined in the fort, where he received a communication from the magistrates, informing him that his authority was at an end in New England.

The services of Cotton Mather were called for on this occasion. A long declaration was read from the gallery of the town-house, which was prepared by him, as was generally supposed, with very little warning. Hutchinson says, "There would be room to doubt whether this declaration was not a work of time, and prepared beforehand, if it did not appear, from the style and language, to have been the work of one of the ministers in Boston, who had a remarkable talent for quick and sudden composures." The circumstance, that his services should have been called for, shows that he was familiar with the political affairs and questions of the day.

From the account given by Samuel Mather of his father's agency in the revolution, one would suppose that the movement against Andros and his crew, as he calls them, was not wholly unexpected. He says, that while those "roaring lions



and ravaging bears were in the midst of their ravages," which, by a slight confusion of metaphor, he makes to consist in their "fleecing" the people, (a phrase which does not very accurately describe the operations of those animals against the flock,) a strange disposition entered into the body of the people to assert their liberties. The phrase, *strange* revolution, implies his own, and probably his father's opinion, that it was not called for; and he actually says, that the more sensible gentlemen in Boston feared lest a public excitement of the kind should be produced by some soldiers, who, having refused to take part in the eastern war, and having thereby incurred the governor's displeasure, would, for the sake of securing themselves, engage the country in a revolution, that would destroy the chief magistrate's power.

These gentlemen consulted with Mr. Mather, and agreed, if possible, to extinguish by their personal influence and exertions, all fires, that others might attempt to kindle; but that, if they found the country people, who were more excited than others, should push the matter so far as to render a revolution unavoidable, they would put themselves at the head of the movement and direct it. A declaration was accordingly prepared, to be used, in case of necessity, doubtless the one which was afterwards employed. It was not, then,



as Hutchinson supposed, a quick and sudden composure ; Samuel Mather had ample information on the subject ; and, had it been possible for him to claim for his father the honor of preparing such a paper on the spur of the occasion, he would have seized the opportunity to mention it to his praise.

The same authority assures us, that when the community suddenly rose on the 18th of April, those gentlemen, who had anticipated that result, found it necessary to appear, as they had proposed in case of emergency, to direct the blind fury of the people. Then, he says, Mr. Mather appeared, like Nestor or Ulysses, and, by his wise and powerful appeals, withheld the people from those excesses, into which they were ready to run. This, he thinks, saved the fallen oppressors from a tragical fate ; for, had a single syllable been said by any man of influence in favor of avenging the public wrongs on those who had inflicted them, they would have been put to death without mercy or delay.

He also mentions that this change was seasonable, to prevent his father from suffering under their persecution ; for, on the very day that he was to have been committed to prison, those who were to have done him that injury were actually imprisoned themselves. There is no other information given on the subject of this proposed

arrest; but there is no reason to doubt it; for, while there was no ground for a legal charge against him, the governor probably had information of his movements, and could easily have found a pretext for giving the name of justice to personal revenge. He was desired to attend a meeting of the inhabitants of Boston, previous to the revolution, when he addressed the people with great effect, dissuading them from violence, which would be injurious to their cause, and thus succeeded in restraining their passions. This, to be sure, was a favor to the government; but men of that description always resent a favor of that kind, as much as an insult or wrong.

Dr. Mather, at this change, which seemed so favorable for Massachusetts, made efforts, which were seconded by several men of influence in England, to obtain the restoration of the charter, and at one time seemed to come very near succeeding. He had engaged the interest of the Dissenting ministers, who, at that time, formed a powerful body, and several members of Parliament also took a strong interest in his mission. But the King was strongly prejudiced against the former charter, and was determined to retain the appointment of governor in his own hands. A bill was introduced into the House of Commons and passed, providing for the restoration of the charters; but the King suddenly prorogued the Par-

liament for the purpose of going to Ireland, and the opportunity was lost, if ever it had really existed. Andros, instead of being punished for his tyranny, obtained from the King the government of Virginia, where he spent the remainder of his life.

Dr. Mather, believing the restoration of the old charter to be entirely out of the question, abandoned all hope of succeeding, and thought it best to secure as favorable terms as possible without insisting on this. But two other agents, who were sent out from Massachusetts, declared that their authority only extended to the solicitation of the old charter, without permitting them to accept a new one. A new one, however, was prepared, which Dr. Mather thought it advisable to accept, as the best which could be had, though it deprived the colony of some of the privileges, which it had claimed and enjoyed before. As the other agents were of a different opinion, the business was managed with him alone; and, as an act of grace to him, the appointment of all those officers, which the new charter reserved to the crown, was given to Dr. Mather; a compliment which was rather unfortunate, since it gave the impression, that he had acted the part of a courtier rather than of a friend to his country.

These suspicions were certainly unjust; for he had spent considerable sums of his own property

for his support while abroad, for which he never received full payment ; and, from his well-known character, it is manifest that his error, if it was one, was an error of judgment and not of intention. But the General Court, who might be supposed good judges of what was wanted, approved his conduct, and appointed a day of thanksgiving in consequence of his return, and the successful result of his labors. His son might have seen enough in his father's history to give him a distaste for those public cares, in which he had a strong passion for engaging ; for his father, through all his remaining days, was troubled with the feeling that he was suspected, distrusted, and abused by those, whom he had done his best to serve. If the charter was, as the General Court declared in the proclamation for thanksgiving, a "settlement of government, in which their Majesties graciously gave distinguishing marks of their royal favor and goodness," there seemed to be no reason why his accepting such favors should be censured as injurious to his country.

Perhaps the selection, which he made, of a person to hold the office of governor, was one of the chief reasons of this suspicion. Sir William Phips, a person adventurous and energetic by nature, but singularly destitute of the ability and discretion, which were needed in that high trust, was the man whom he recommended ; and in this

choice he was influenced by Cotton Mather who probably thought it not the least of Phips's merits, that he was willing to receive advice from wiser men. He had made himself known by his persevering efforts to discover the rich wreck of a Spanish vessel near the Bahamas, in which he succeeded, gaining considerable property from the vessel, and the honor of knighthood from the crown. His principal merit in the eye of the country was, that he did not coincide with Andros in his oppression, and that he rejected the government when it was offered him by King James.

Sir William Phips did not long retain the office in which the partiality of his friends, the Mathers, had placed him. Though kind and generous in his disposition, he was fiery and indiscreet. He first brought himself into discredit by a dispute with the collector of the customs, whose authority was not universally admitted. The people thought it enough to enter and clear at the naval office, and the governor, himself being the naval officer, favored the popular impression; but, the collector asserting his right and seizing a vessel, the governor resented it so warmly, as to inflict personal violence upon him. He had a similar misunderstanding with the captain of a British frigate. Having required him, as he had a right, to detach some of the hands on a particular service, the captain refused; upon which the governor

beat him in the street, and then committed him to prison. He was ordered to England to answer for this proceeding ; but, while he was engaged in securing his authority and answering the complaints offered against him, he was seized with an illness of which he died.

It is in connexion with the proceedings on the subject of witchcraft, that Cotton Mather is most generally and least favorably known. But prominent as his name appears, in all this affair, from its beginning to its close, it is not easy to understand the precise extent of his responsibility. He fully believed in this kind of supernatural agency, as was common in that day ; the wise and foolish stood on the same ground ; though many were skeptical as to particular cases of that agency, there was none who seemed wholly to deny its existence. The circumstance of his giving credit to tales of this kind, would not form any just reproach upon the name of Mather, since no amount of learning and talent could then exempt any man from superstition.

But there is reason to believe, that he went farther than this ; and that he led the men of his day farther than they would have gone, had it not been for him. How far his credulity will justify his attempting to excite the public mind upon the subject, must be left for the moralist to say. He was not probably aware what a fierce



spirit he was raising; and when it was raised, he was at once swept away with its fury; so that, though we cannot hold him guiltless, his responsibility is less than if he had not been so thoroughly steeped in the delusion. No one, who reads the history of the time, can doubt his agency in creating the general excitement; and a question arises, What could have been his object in making those ill-omened exertions? Was it his natural restlessness, which compelled him to interest himself in all that was passing? Or was it to gratify his ravenous appetite for wonders? Or was it a movement, by which he hoped to restore to the clergy the influence, which they once held in public affairs, but which the change of circumstances and public sentiment was fast wresting from their hands? The latter supposition would imply a degree of art and hypocrisy, which does not appear to have been in his nature. He was more adroit in imposing on himself than on others. At the same time, various impulses, of some of which he was not conscious, may have combined to make him excite in the public mind that superstitious fear, the most savage of all passions, which, when once excited, could not be satisfied without blood.

If he had followed the example of some other good men, who, after the frenzy was over, lamented and publicly acknowledged the blind fanaticism under which they had acted, he would have been



more generally forgiven. But it does not appear that his eyes were ever opened. To the day of his death, he seems to have retained his full conviction that all was preternatural; and indeed that the loss of innocent lives, so far from being the result of delusion, was the effect of diabolical agency exerted with unusual art and power. The public accused him as the chief author of the excitement; but while he was very desirous to throw off the odium, which rested upon him, by showing that he himself had always preached caution and forbearance, it is clear that no uneasiness from within, no self-upbraiding for the part he had acted, ever disturbed his repose.

After the executions in Salem, he admits that there has been "a mistake"; not in believing in the witchcraft, nor, so far as can be discovered, in the selection of victims; the mistake appeared in the character of those, against whom charges were at last made; for the accusers, becoming satiated with humble sacrifices, at length brought their accusations against those in high places, whereupon it was discovered that they were going too far. He seems to lament this chiefly because it gives advantage to the accuser of the brethren.

In 1685, the year in which he was ordained, he published a work called *Memorable Providences relating to Witchcraft*. This was several years before the Salem tragedy; and he remarks

that this work of his was used as authority on that occasion, at the same time greatly commending the wisdom of the magistrates, for submitting themselves to the counsel of learned writers. Cases of witchcraft at distant intervals had occurred in some parts of the country. One victim had been hanged in Charlestown half a century before. One was executed at Hartford in 1662 ; and in 1671 there was a case at Groton, which was attended with circumstances, which, one would have thought, might have opened the most superstitious eyes.

One Elizabeth Knapp, moved probably by spite against a neighbor, went through the ordinary evolutions, and was pronounced bewitched ; but the person accused, instead of resenting it, went directly to the accuser, who endeavored to prevent her approach by counterfeited convulsions, prayed by her bedside, and so wrought upon her conscience, that she dared not persevere in her vile purpose ; she came to herself, confessing that she had been moved by Satan to bring a false and malicious charge. Had others, in similar circumstances, possessed the good sense and religious temper of this person, the probability is, that all would have been saved from destruction ; but, as the charge was generally fixed on those, who were disliked for their ill temper, and they were exasperated to madness by the accusation, there

was no such appeal made to the conscience and the fears of the accuser.

Another case, which indeed seems almost the only one beside, was attended with self-explaining circumstances. The other instances do not belong to the department of witchcraft, but to that of haunted houses, such as are not unknown at the present day, when some inmate of a family, in sport or wantonness, undertakes to practise on the fears of the rest.

The case alluded to was that of one Smith of Hadley, a worthy and exemplary man, who had been severely threatened by a pauper, whom he had offended in the discharge of some official duty. He fell into a painful decline ; and, says Mather, *while he was yet of a sound mind*, he assured his brother that strange things should be seen in Hadley ; that he should not be dead when he seemed to be so, and at the same time expressed his suspicion, that the woman in question had made him the subject of her revenge. He then “ became delirious and uttered a speech incessant and voluble, and, as it was judged, in various languages. He cried out, not only of pains, but of pins tormenting him in various parts of his body ; and the attendants found one of them.” This seemed to Cotton Mather a clear case of witchcraft, and he recorded it with sufficient minuteness. Happily the people of Hadley saw the matter in its

true light; and though some young men undertook to persecute the woman, they soon desisted, and she was saved from a death, which was inflicted on many when the evidence was equally strong in favor of the accused.

It was not long before he enjoyed the great felicity of having a case of witchcraft directly under his eye. In 1688, the family of John Goodwin, in Boston, was afflicted with preternatural visitations. The eldest daughter, about thirteen years of age, had some quarrel with a laundress, an Irishwoman, and, shortly after, the girl and her sisters were tormented by strange affections of the body, which, to any one at all suspicious, would have carried their own explanation with them, but were pronounced *diabolical* by the superstitious physicians who happened to be consulted. The ministers of Boston and Charlestown held a day of fasting and prayer; and the youngest of the children, afraid to persevere, and at the same time afraid to confess, was delivered from its tormentors. But the magistrates took up the affair, and, having examined the person on whom suspicions rested, committed her to prison.

Her conduct, when brought to trial, so clearly indicated mental derangement, that the court could not with decency proceed without appointing several physicians "to examine her very strictly whether she was no way crazed in her intellectuals."

They do not appear to have been acquainted with the fact, that a person may be deranged on one subject, and yet sanè on all others. They conversed with her a good deal, and, finding that she gave connected replies, agreed that she was in full possession of her mind. She was then found guilty of witchcraft and sentenced to die.

Cotton Mather was now in his element. He paid many visits to this poor old lunatic after her condemnation, and received vast entertainment from her communications. She described her interviews with the Prince of darkness, and her attendance upon his meetings, with a clearness that seems to have filled him with perfect delight.

After her execution, the children, not inclined to abandon their successful stratagem, complained of suffering as much as before. Some instances of their prudence are amusing. He says, "they were often near drowning or burning themselves, and they often strangled themselves with their neckcloths; but the providence of God still ordered the seasonable succors of them that looked after them." On the least reproof of their parents, "they would roar excessively"; it usually took abundance of time to dress or undress them, through the strange postures into which they would be twisted on purpose to hinder it." "If they were bidden to do a needless thing, such as to rub a clean table, they were able to do it unmolested;

but if to do a useful thing, as to rub a dirty table, they would presently, with many torments, be made incapable." Truly, if such are the evidences that children are bewitched, there is reason to doubt whether preternatural visitations have yet ceased from the land.

Such a choice opportunity, as this family afforded, for inquiry into the physiology of witchcraft, was by no means to be lost. In order to inspect the specimen more at leisure, he had the eldest daughter brought to his own house; he wished "to confute the Sadducism of that debauched age," and the girl took care that the materials should not be wanting.

Her conduct during her residence there is well worth noting, as it is recorded by his own hand. When he prayed in the room, her hands were by a strong, but not even force, clapped upon her ears; and, when the bystanders withdrew them, she would declare that she could not hear a word that he said. She complained that Glover's (the name of the person that was executed) chain was on her leg, and thereupon walked with the constrained gait of one who was bound. An invisible chain would be thrown upon her, while she cried out with pain and fear. Sometimes he could knock it off, or rather prevent its being fastened; but often she would be pulled by it out of her chair towards the fire, so that they were obliged to hold her



She seemed to take great pleasure in entertaining him in this way, perhaps out of gratitude that he never intimated any suspicion.

The manner in which she played with his religious prejudices shows considerable art. A Quaker's book, which was then one of the greatest of abominations, was brought to her, and she read whole pages in it, with the exception of the names of the Deity and the Savior, which she was not able to speak. Such books as she might have read with profit, she was not permitted to open ; or, if she was urged to read in her Bible or Catechism, she was immediately taken with contortions. On the contrary, she could read in a jest-book without the least difficulty, and actually seemed to enjoy it. Popish books she was permitted to read at pleasure, but a work against the Catholics, she might not touch.

One gleam of suspicion seemed to shoot over his mind on one occasion ; for he says, " I, considering there might be a snare in it, put a stop to this fanciful business. Only I could not but be amazed at one thing ; a certain prayer-book, [the Episcopal, doubtless,] being brought her, she not only could read it very well, but also did read a large part of it over, calling it her Bible, and putting more than ordinary respect upon it. If she were going into her tortures, at the tender of this book, she would recover herself to read it. Only



when she came to the Lord's prayer, now and then occurring in that book, she would have her eyes put out ; so that she must turn over a new leaf, and then she could read again. Whereas also there are scriptures in that book, she could read them there ; but if any showed her the same scriptures in the Bible itself, she should sooner die than read them. And she was likewise made unable to read the Psalms in an ancient metre, which this prayer-book had in the same volume with it."

It was not very surprising, that she should after a time lose her veneration for him. Accordingly, he remarks, that, though her carriage had been dutiful, "it was afterwards with a sauciness, which I was not used to be treated withal." She would knock at his study door, telling him that some one below would be glad to see him ; when he had taken the trouble to go down, and scolded her for the falsehood, she would say, "Mrs. Mather is always glad to see you." "She would call out to him with numberless impertinencies." Having determined to give a public account of her case, in a sermon to his congregation, she was troubled at it, thinking it not unlikely that sharper eyes than his might be turned upon her. She made many attempts to prevent it by threatening him with the vengeance of the spirits, till he was almost out of patience, and exorcized them in Latin, Greek, and Hebrew. All these were per-

fectly intelligible to them; "but the Indian languages they did not seem so well to understand."

One part of the system of this artful young creature was to persuade him, that he was under the special protection of Heaven, so that spells could have no power over him. When he went to prayer, "the demons would throw her on the floor, where she would whistle, and sing, and yell, to drown the voice of prayer; and she would fetch blows with her fist and kicks with her foot at the man that prayed. But still her fist and foot would recoil, when within an inch or two of him, as if rebounding against a wall." This powerful appeal to his vanity was not lost upon him. It made him more solicitous than ever to patronize the delusion.\*

This account of his personal intercourse with the demoniacs is given at length, because it illustrates his character, and the heartiness with which he entered into the snare. It also affords the only apology which can be made for his attempts to spread the excitement, by showing that he was

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\* In the archives of the Massachusetts Historical Society, among the manuscripts of Cotton Mather, there is a paper, on which is endorsed the following curious record in his hand-writing. "*November 29th, 1692.* While I was preaching at a private fast, (kept for a possessed young woman,) on Mark ix. 28, 29, the Devil in the damsel flew upon me, and tore the leaf, as it is now torn, over against the text."

himself completely deluded. No man, with any artful design, would have exhibited himself in so grotesque a light. Let it be remembered, too, that the above particulars were reprinted in London, with a preface by Richard Baxter, in which he says, "This great instance comes with such convincing evidence, that he must be a very obdurate Sadducee, that will not believe it."

It is not difficult to conceive what the fascination of such narratives must have been, when they came from the pen of a learned divine, who was supposed to have devoted particular attention to the subject. They were dressed in such forms, as to excite the appetite of superstition, and from our knowledge of human nature we are safe in believing, that the *Wonders of the Invisible World* was popular, both with old and young, in every part of the country. There is no account of any other person, who displayed the same taste or attempted to operate on others; while it is certain, that he exerted himself diligently for the purpose; making no secret of his persuasion, that such an excitement might be made an engine for restoring the fallen authority of religion, and as a preliminary, replacing that power in the hands of the clergy, which they lost when the circumstances of the country and the feelings of the people were altered.

In 1692, the seed, which he had sown, began to bear fruit. Some young girls in the family of

Mr. Parris, minister of Salem village, now a part of Danvers, began to go through such evolutions as they had seen described in cases of witchcraft. Physicians were consulted, and one of them in an evil hour gave it as his opinion that supernatural agency was concerned. Cotton Mather himself says, "They were in all things afflicted as bad as John Goodwin's children at Boston," and gives this as a reason for not enlarging upon their sufferings. So that the movements of the young conspirators on this occasion seem to have been regulated by their pattern, excepting that they were carried a little farther.

The circumstances were made important at once, by appointing a day of fasting and prayer. The girls accused an old Indian woman, who lived in Mr. Parris's family, as the person who bewitched them; and she, worn out by fear, exhaustion, and as it is intimated, by severe treatment, confessed all that was expected and required. This encouraged the girls to persevere, if they can be supposed to have acted with deliberation, when the probable explanation of their conduct is, that they were bewildered and swept away with the frenzy, which they had themselves excited.

The agency of Cotton Mather soon appeared in this transaction. The magistrates applied to the Boston clergy for advice; which they gave in such a manner, as to encourage the excesses already

committed, and to lead on to more. They recommended caution in respect to evidence, but at the same time advised that the proceedings should be vigorously carried on.

The result of these deliberations was drawn up by Cotton Mather, who often mentioned it afterwards in terms of high praise. That there may be no doubt as to the authorship, he says that it was drawn up by Mr. Mather the younger. There were many formal expressions in it, in which prudence was recommended; but the spirit and certain effect of it were to sanction what had been done, and to encourage farther investigations.

He was not sustained by all the clergy. Mr. Brattle, in his letter on the subject, published in the Collections of the Historical Society, says, that "Increase Mather did utterly condemn" the proceedings of that period. Samuel Willard also, a venerable man, would never sanction the measure, though three of the judges were members of his church. This bears hard on Cotton Mather; for his father and Dr. Willard undoubtedly believed in the reality of witchcraft, as well as he; and this shows, that to believe in supernatural agency was one thing, and to turn the engines of persecution on those, who were accused of that crime, was another.

There is no need here of tracing the history of the events, that took place in Salem, any farther

than Cotton Mather is directly concerned ; and it must be acknowledged, that he made himself very prominent in all the proceedings. He greatly commends the impartiality and forbearance of the judges, who borrowed light from his books among their other sources. What sort of counsel they were likely to get from this quarter, appears from a passage extracted by Mr. Upham from one of his sermons. "When we are in our church assemblies, how many devils do you imagine crowd in among us? There is a devil that rocks one to sleep. There is a devil that makes another to be thinking of, he scarcely knows what himself. And there is a devil that makes another to be pleased with wild and wicked speculations. It is also possible, that we have our closets or our studies gloriously perfumed with devotions every day ; but alas ! can we shut the devil out of them? No ; let us go where we will, we shall still find a devil nigh unto us." Little did the venerable doctor think, that he himself and his coadjutors were furnishing one of the best proofs of diabolical agency in the world, by their unhappy activity on these memorable occasions.

As soon as the fury of the storm was over, he is found drawing up an account of the trials. This is said to have been published by the special command of the governor, and is heralded with a flourish of trumpets from Stoughton, the presiding



judge. He takes a contemptuous notice of the doubts, which had begun to prevail upon the subject, but does not give any intimation to his readers, that the whole country was filled with horror and shame.

If any are disposed to speak lightly of New England, in consequence of this visitation, he repeats for their instruction the following story, which answers the double purpose of recognising the doctrine of possession, and of furnishing him with a reply. "There are many parts of the world, who, if they do on this occasion insult over the people of God, need only to be told the story of what happened at Lorin in the Duchy of Gulic, where, a Popish curate having ineffectually tried many charms to eject the devil out of a damsel there possessed, he at last, in a passion, bid the devil come out of her into himself; but the devil answered him (in good Latin), 'What need I meddle now with one, whom, at the last day, I am sure to have and hold as my own for ever.'"

Some points, he thinks, are clearly established by the results of the trials. The chief one is, that there is a great conspiracy among the powers of darkness to root out the Christian religion from New England. The devil having always looked upon that land as his own, naturally felt aggrieved when the Pilgrims took possession of it, and even more disgusted with their religious principles and



lives. It is also proved, that the devil, "exhibiting himself ordinarily as a small black man, has decoyed a number of base creatures, and enlisted them in his service, by entering their names in a book." These persons meet with their employer in "hellish rendezvouses," wherein they have their diabolical sacraments, imitating the baptism and supper of our Lord. Each one of these associators has spectres or devils in his command, and many are suffering under their evil hands, "being miserably scratched and bitten." The spectres have an odd faculty of clothing the most substantial instruments of torture with invisibility, while the wounds given by them are sufficiently palpable. One of the worst things about it is, that the devils have obtained power to take on themselves the likeness of harmless people; "there is an agony in the minds of men, lest the devil should shame us with devices of a finer thread, than was ever before practised upon the world." "And meantime he improves the darkness of this affair to push us into a blind man's buffet, and we are even ready to be sinfully, yea hotly and madly, mauling one another in the dark."

The conclusion to which he came is more practical, than could have been expected from such a beginning. "If we carry things to such extremes of passion, as are now gaining among us, the devil will bless himself to find such a convenient lodg-

ing. And it may be that the wrath, which we have had, one against another, has had more than a little influence on the coming down of the devil in that wrath, which now amazes us. For this, among other causes, perhaps God has permitted the devils to be worrying as they now are among us. But it is high time to leave off all devilism, when the devil himself is falling upon us ; it is no time to be reviling and censuring one another with a devilish wrath, when the wrath of the devil is annoying us." If he had himself followed this sensible advice, the visitation of darkness might have brought happier results than it did.

In his account of some of the trials at Salem, his moral sense seems to be strangely perverted. When the clergyman, George Burroughs, was before the court, with no other testimony against him, than that he had shown many exploits of bodily strength, some of the witnesses, confused perhaps by the consciousness of their perjury, were for a time unable to speak. The judge, Stoughton, inquired of Burroughs, what he supposed hindered them from giving testimony. He replied he imagined it was the devil. "That honorable person replied. 'How comes the devil, then, to be so loath to have testimony brought against you?' which cast him into a very great confusion." As well it might ; for it made it clear as the sun, that he had no chance for his life, in the hands of a

judge, whom superstition and prejudice made so oppressive and unfeeling.

Among other perversions of justice, two of the afflicted were permitted to testify, that the ghosts of Burroughs's wives had appeared and declared that he had been the death of them. It is true, as Mr. Upham remarks, that there are very strong indications of personal malice in this testimony against Mr. Burroughs, who had formerly preached in Salem village, and been the object of some ill-will.

This, however, was not peculiar to him. Several of the women appeared to have been ill-tempered and violent in their language, and in that way to have become objects of general hatred and suspicion, till the public sentiment was so strong against them, that no one lamented their fate. It is probably true, that they had at times threatened the witnesses. Considering the proportion of evil in the world, the witnesses could not pass through life without some disasters, and, in all cases of accident and suffering, their suspicions turned at once upon their ill-favored neighbors.

Neither was their testimony an entire fabrication. Among other things they deposed, that strong drink in their vessels had suddenly and unaccountably disappeared ; which was doubtless true ; but might have happened without diabolical agency, and in fact without any other than their own. The evils

complained of were sickness, misfortune in business, loss of cattle and other visitations, which no doubt had occurred, as they said, but might have been accounted for by the common order of nature.

One remark of Cotton Mather is true, though the reasoning in it requires to be inverted. Speaking of the provoking manner in which the witches elude observation, he breaks forth in a tone of disappointment; "Our witches do seem to have got the knack; and this is one of the things, which make me think that witchcraft will not be fully understood, till the day when there shall not be one witch in the world." It is true, in point of fact, not that witchcraft has been explained, because witches are gone, but that witches are no longer found, because the matter is understood.

There are in the testimony, which he has set before us as the most convincing offered on these occasions, many such instances of mistaking cause for effect. It was testified in the case of Bridget Bishop, that a woman named Whetford had accused Bishop of stealing a spoon; Bishop resented the charge, and made many threatenings of revenge. One night, Bishop, with another person, appeared by her bedside, and consulted what should be done with her. At length, they took her to the seaside and there tried to drown her; but she called on God, and his name destroyed their power. After this, Whetford was a "crazed sort of woman."

Nothing could be clearer than that the lunacy was father to the charge ; but at that day it was thought much more natural to ascribe the lunacy to preternatural power

Cotton Mather afterwards was unwilling to bear the odium of what he had done. He then endeavored to show, and probably deluded himself into the belief, that he had discouraged the popular passion. But there can be no doubt, that he officiated on the occasion like the fire department of Constantinople, who are said at times to pour oil from their engines upon the fire, which they profess to extinguish. In this report of the trials, he quotes "gracious words," as he modestly calls them, from the advice given by the Boston clergy. "We cannot, but with all thankfulness," says he, "acknowledge the success, which the merciful God has given unto the sedulous and assiduous endeavors of our honorable rulers, to detect the abominable witchcrafts which have been committed in the country ; humbly praying, that the discovery of these mysterious and mischievous wickednesses may be perfected." The only touch of humanity about the work is found in his reference to Giles Corey, whom he tenderly calls, "a poor man, lately prest unto death, because of his refusing to plead." The manifest objection to this representation is, that it gives the impression that Corey's suffering under the *peine forte et dure* was a mat

ter of taste and choice ; whereas the truth is, that he firmly refused to plead, because he saw that there was no hope of justice or mercy from the savages into whose hands he had fallen.

It is also said in the close of the report ; “ If a drop of innocent blood should be shed in the prosecution of the witchcrafts among us, how unhappy should we be ! For which cause I cannot express myself in better terms than those of a most worthy person, who lives near the present centre of those things. ‘ The word of God in these matters is to be looked into with due circumspection, that Satan deceive us not with his devices.’ But on the other hand, if the storm of justice do only fall on the guilty witches and wretches, which have defiled our land, how happy ! ” From this it appears, that there was nothing insupportable in his unhappiness on this occasion.

The manner in which, in his *MAGNALIA*, he refers to the Salem history does him no honor. Without the least expression of regret for the innocent blood, that had been shed, he only remarks that “ there had been a going too far in that affair.” But, so far from taking any responsibility upon himself, or his coadjutors, he charges these excesses upon the powers of darkness, which he said had circumvented them, and made them proceed against persons, who were not guilty. That they had gone too far, he says, using the words



of another, appears from the numbers of the accused ; " it was not to be conceived, that in so small a compass of land, so many should so abominably leap into the devil's lap all at once." Many of them were persons of blameless lives, who could hardly be supposed guilty of such a sin. Of the nineteen who were executed, not one at the last moment confessed himself guilty.

On the strength of these considerations, which unfortunately did not occur to him till somewhat late in the day, he thought there was some mistake, and says that he had heard of the like mistakes in other places. In fact, there was nothing in the acknowledgments of error made by many of the actors in these scenes, which would have prevented their engaging in a similar prosecution at any future time. Some were sincerely penitent, and had their eyes entirely opened. But some of the most distinguished actually regretted, that the turning tide of popular feeling prevented them from clearing the land of witchcraft and sorcery.

There were those, who, at the time, disapproved these proceedings, but, finding themselves unable to resist the current, chose rather to be silent observers of the scene, than to hazard their peace, and even their lives, by an ineffectual opposition. Ineffectual they supposed it would be ; and yet it appears, that, as soon as one



energetic man turned upon his accusers, and prosecuted them for libel and slander, the spell was broken, their charges were seen in the true light, and it was impossible to renew the delusion.

That there were those, who understood the true history and character of the excitement, appears from the remarkable letter of Thomas Brattle, which is written in the spirit of the present age. It was not published at the time, and, had it been, it might possibly have injured him without serving the cause of truth ; but it is matter of regret, that the experiment was not tried ; for some times, when wisdom cries and no man regards it at the moment, it prepares the way for an earlier triumph of reason and humanity ; and in cases where it excites passion, as his letter probably would have done, the public are inflamed because the voice reaches their conscience, requires them to justify their proceedings to themselves, and compels them, in spite of themselves, to ponder, and thus deprives them of the apology and consolation, that " they know not what they do."

Had the governor of the Commonwealth been a man of higher order, much of this fanaticism, or rather the cruel results of it, might have been prevented. When William Penn officiated as judge in his new colony, two women, accused of witchcraft, were presented by the grand jury. Without treating the charge with contempt, which

the public mind would not have borne, he charged the jury to bring them in guilty of being suspected of witchcraft, which was not a crime that exposed them to the penalty of the law. Sir William Phips appears to have been in every thing the reverse of Penn. He had much of that active energy, which is so often mistaken for intellectual ability, though he was neither sagacious nor discerning. In his own concerns he was sufficiently headstrong and ungovernable; but in matters like witchcraft he was wholly at the disposal of others, not having formed, and not being capable of forming, any sound judgment of his own.

## CHAPTER III.

*Sir William Phips. — Robert Calef. — The Influence of his Writings in exposing the Deceptions and allaying the Frenzy of Witchcraft. — Further Opinions of Cotton Mather on this Subject, and his Attempts to justify his Conduct.*

NOTHING can exceed the triumph, with which Cotton Mather hailed the appointment of Phips to the office of governor. He writes in his Diary, "The time for favor is now come ; yea, the set time is come. I am now to receive the answers of so many prayers as have been employed for my absent parent, and the deliverance and settlement of my poor country. We have not the former charter, but we have a better in the room of it ; one which much better suits our circumstances. And, instead of my being made a sacrifice to wicked rulers, all the counsellors of the province are of my father's nomination, and my father-in-law, with several related to me, and several brethren of my own church, are among them. The governor of the Province is not my enemy, but one whom I baptized, and one of my flock, and one of my dearest friends."

Cotton Mather was not disappointed in his expectations. Governor Phips, as long as he remained in office, was uniformly friendly to him. It is not right to say, without direct evidence to that effect, that Cotton Mather was the keeper of his conscience ; but he was certainly his confidential adviser, and the governor adopted his views and feelings with respect to the invisible world. Not so his lady ; she appears to have had a mind and will of her own. Once, in her husband's absence, hearing that a poor creature had been committed to prison on suspicion of witchcraft, she sent orders to the officer to release the accused person without delay ; and the sheriff, though the movement was not strictly legal, thought it his wisdom and safety to comply.

The governor probably felt grateful to Cotton Mather and his father for their exertions in his behalf ; but there were many in the country, who were no better satisfied with the new governor, than with the new charter, and always felt indignant at Cotton Mather for the part he took at the time of Andros's fall. The general sentiment was, that the old magistrates then should reassume their offices, and go on as if nothing had happened ; but Cotton Mather exerted himself to persuade the people, that such a step would interrupt the prosperous course of his father's agency, and make the King less willing to grant the privi-

leges they desired. When the new charter came, with its abridgment of their rights, they felt as if, had not his influence prevented the resumption of the old charter, they might have continued in the enjoyment of it, without any interruption or question from England. Probably they would not have found it so ; but such was their suspicion, and of course, they were provoked with him, whose influence prevented them taking the step, by which they believed that their ancient privileges might have been secured.

Those who were at enmity with Cotton Mather, on account of his concern with witchcraft, brought this also against him, that he was the means of giving them such a chief magistrate. They seem, however, to ascribe Sir William's misdeeds to his weakness, and do not hesitate to say, that if his clerical adviser could have had his way, the reign of terror would not have been over so soon. Not that they ascribe the sudden stop put to the prosecutions to any rising independence on the part of the governor, but simply to the circumstance that his own lady was at length accused. It is said, that Cotton Mather, finding that so much of the responsibility was coming home to himself, resorted to his pen for defence, and wrote a sort of apologue, in which he compared himself to Orpheus, and his father to Mercury, attempting to give a striking representation of the value

of the blessings, which they both had been instrumental in bringing to the country.

The way in which Calef speaks of Sir William Phips, shows his conviction, that he was a well-meaning man, who desired the good of his country; but, from his want of talent and education, was unable to act independently for the public good. At the same time, he shows his opinion of the extent of Cotton Mather's activity and influence, by ascribing to him the responsibility of all that the governor had done. Phips died too soon to be grateful to Calef for this defence, which ascribed his innocence to his inefficiency; but Mather, though on any other occasion he would have been proud to have it said, that the chief magistrate was under his influence, felt that, in this instance, the credit of having that influence would bring him more reproach than renown. It is intimated, that, on this account rather than from the natural exaggeration of friendship, he represents Phips as a man of more ability, than he or any one else believed him to possess.

The name of Robert Calef deserves to be mentioned with honor in connexion with this unhappy delusion. Though a merchant by profession, and therefore not so directly concerned as many others with such subjects of thought, he had good sense enough to see the truth and the right. In this he was not alone; there were others who

saw plainly, that all the accusations, and the cruelty which they occasioned, were either the result of hypocrisy or excited imaginations. But, while others were swept away by the torrent, he was stout-hearted enough to declare his sentiments and maintain them. The plain common sense, with which he opposed fanaticism, was exceedingly provoking to those, who had involved their reputation in the success of the delusion; and the general outcry of wrath, with which his statements were received, showed the fear on the part of his adversaries, that truth would be found on his side, and error and shame on theirs.

Calef's letters and defence were published in London in the year 1700. The delusion was then in a great measure done away; but, as Hutchinson remarks, there were so many living, who had taken part in those transactions, and were therefore interested to keep up the impression that there was some supernatural agency on the occasion, that, long after the public mind was disabused, the truth could find no welcome. As soon as Calef's book reached this country, it was ordered by Dr. Increase Mather to be publicly burned in the College Yard; a ceremony which doubtless had the usual effect of such burnt offerings, causing the book to be in general demand, and therefore filling the hearts of the author and bookseller with joy.



The part taken by Calef was particularly offensive to Cotton Mather, inasmuch as he charges him with being the chief agent in exciting the passions of the community to this work of blood. After the execution of Mrs. Hibbins, the widow of one of the counsellors, who was hanged for witchcraft in Boston in 1655, much to the dissatisfaction of many judicious persons, the taste for such scenes had abated ; and it was not till Cotton Mather, in 1685, published an account of several cases of witchcraft with arguments to prove that they were no delusions, that such fears and fancies revived. The case of Goodwin's family took place soon after, and this being also published renewed the appetite for horrors, and prepared the way for the scenes exhibited in Salem.

The advice given by the Boston clergy to the Governor and Council, which was drawn up by Cotton Mather, was another reason for Calef's directing his battery against him. Douglass speaks of it as the address of some of the very popular but very weak clergy, to Sir William Phips, a very weak governor, with thanks for what was already done and exhortations to proceed.

It cannot be said, that this is an unfair representation of it ; for it certainly exults in the success, which had attended the prosecutions, and though it gives many exhortations and rules for caution, it winds up with these words ; " We

cannot but humbly recommend unto the government the speedy and vigorous prosecution of such as have rendered themselves obnoxious, according to the directions given in the laws of God, and the wholesome statutes of the English nation, for the detection of witchcraft." There is no doubt, as to the course recommended ; and the dissuasion only amounts to a caution, not to rely too much upon evidence "received only on the devil's authority," since he was not to be implicitly trusted.

Calef remarks with sufficient sharpness on Mather's publications, in one of his own, entitled *More Wonders from the Invisible World*. He declares that many of those facts, to which the afflicted, according to Mather, testified, were fabrications without the least basis of truth, and that sometimes circumstances, which were true and easily accounted for, were exaggerated and distorted, till not a vestige of truth remained. In some instances, where the afflicted, according to Mather, were bitten by the witches, it was sufficiently evident to the court and jury, that the prisoners had not a tooth in their head.

One instance, related by him, shows how basely justice was perverted. While one of the accused was on trial, a girl testified that the accused had stabbed her with a knife, which was broken in her limb, and the broken piece of the blade was produced in court ; but a young man came forward

and stated to the judges, that he had broken his knife the day before, and threw away the broken piece in presence of the witness. He immediately produced his broken knife, and, on comparing the parts, it appeared that his statement was true. Instead of committing this perjured wretch for trial, the court only reprimanded her, and actually used her testimony for the condemnation of other prisoners.

The witnesses were allowed to tell old stories of twenty or thirty years' standing, which could have no relation to the case on trial, except what prejudice gave them; and it is clear to any one, who reads the testimony, that the judges did every thing in their power, by artful leading questions and overbearing menaces, to drive the prisoners either to confession or condemnation, or, what was worse, to cheat them with false hopes of mercy.

The case of Mr. Burroughs, the clergyman, is a dark one, and Cotton Mather, according to Calef, was guilty of misrepresenting the testimony against him, and of cruelly exulting in his doom. The principal things alleged against him, were his feats of personal strength. Mather says, that he was a feeble man; but Calef declares, that all, who ever knew him, were well aware that he was from his youth remarkable for physical power. In fact he proved on his trial, that another person had at the same time performed the same ex-

plots of strength, so that they evidently were not beyond human power. But, instead of admitting this testimony, which was conclusive in his favor, the court infamously turned it against him, declaring that it must have been the devil in human shape, and Mather has so reported it in his account of the trial. Calef informs us, that, when Burroughs was led to execution, he conducted himself in such a noble manner, and prayed so fervently, as to melt the bystanders with admiring compassion; but Mather, moving about among the crowd, assured them that it was the devil who enabled him to do this, in order to deceive them; and thus encouraged, they exulted in his fate, and afterwards treated his corpse with a brutality unexampled in a Christian land.

If Calef had been a man of doubtful character, or strongly prejudiced against the clergy, it would weigh in favor of those whom he accused. But nothing of the kind is charged against him. Hutchinson, who was nearly connected with the Mather family, speaks of Calef as a man of fair mind, who was deliberate in his statements and brought good evidence to sustain them; and however hardly his statements bear on Cotton Mather, they cannot be rejected without doing him great and manifest injustice.

In a pamphlet, which purports to have been published by some of Cotton Mather's society in

defence of their pastor against Calef's charges, these accusations are commented upon with no little asperity, from an idea, which was no doubt correct, that his attack was directed against the whole magistracy and clergy of the State. They say, that, when he arraigns those honorable persons as guilty of shedding innocent blood, it is strange, that the fear of God, if he ever had any, should not have reminded him of the text, "Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people." As to the clergy, he says, they upheld the delusion so long as they were themselves in no danger; but, when they could no longer defend their ground, not one of them was found conscientious and candid enough to enlighten the public mind upon the subject.

To this, the defenders reply, by quoting some passages from the advice of the clergy, in which they formally recommend caution. It seems, however, that Calef did not confine his charges to one subject, but carried the war into the general field of theology. He declared that the clergy taught "that there are more Almighties than one, and that Satan is almighty, and can do what he pleases." To this they reply, not by disproving the charge, but by charging him with "venomous and malignant purpose to bring the clergy into contempt," which, they say, will only return upon his own head; while, so far from alienating the people from their ministers, they will be requited good "for

the curses of every Shimei." The sarcastic power, with which this pamphlet is written, may be inferred from their merry play on Calef's unfortunate name; "this calf" being the name by which he is mentioned.

At the close of this pamphlet Cotton Mather appears in his own defence, beginning with a lamentation, that he should be called on to answer a vile book, written by one, who pretends to be a merchant, when he is nothing more than a weaver. The only argument advanced by Calef, on the subject of all the remarkable providences, is, "that there is a certain weaver that won't believe them." Therefore Mather addresses himself to his friends, and not to Calef, who, he says, had never mentioned his name without some lie about him.

In reply to the charge, that he had favored the witchcraft delusion, Cotton Mather says, that he had always recommended great caution and charity. On this he insists in the strongest terms. "But you'll say, How came it to pass, that so many people took up a different notion of me? Surely, Satan knows. Perhaps 't was because I thought it my duty always to speak of the honorable judges with as much honor as I could; a crime, which I am generally taxed for, and for which I have been fairly requited; this made people, who judge at a distance, to dream that I ap



proved all that was done. Perhaps also my disposition to avoid extremes, as 't is said 'he that feareth God shall come out of them,' causeth me to be generally obnoxious to the violent in all parties. Or, perhaps, my great adversary always had people full of Robert Calef's malignity, to serve him with calumnies and reproaches."

One passage in it is a singular specimen of patient and resigned devotion. He is speaking of a misrepresentation, which Calef had published in regard to a visit relating to the subject of witchcraft, which he had made to an *energumen* of his flock. "I believe there is not one Christian," says he, "but would think of it with indignation, that when ministers of the gospel faithfully and carefully discharge their duty in visiting the miserable in their flocks, little bits, and scraps, and shreds of their discourse, carried away perhaps by some idle eavesdroppers, should be basely tacked together to render them contemptible; and many falsehoods, yea, and smutty ones too, and such as none but a coal fetched from hell could have suggested, should be added for the blackening of them. It were enough to procure me the respect and friendship of all men, who have the least grain of honesty in them, if I had it not before, to see such a man and such a book treat me with such brutish malignity. However, I am verily persuaded, that the holy Lord, whose we are, and whom we serve,



will at some time or other, make this man a *Major Massabie* for his deliberate wickedness. I will say no more of it, but leave it to those hands, which alone will do right unto us."

It is much to be feared, however, that if justice should be done to him, so far as relates to his conduct on this occasion, he must appear at considerable disadvantage. His contemporaries, as has been suggested, were, almost all of them, more or less involved in the delusion, and of course were not forward to bring charges against each other. But in modern times, when the actors in this tragedy and those directly interested in them are passed away, as soon as the attention is turned to this subject, it must be confessed, that the name of Mather appears foremost, as the most effective and prominent agent in creating the excitement, and pushing it on to its excesses.

That he sincerely believed in the reality of witchcraft, cannot for a moment be doubted; but this does not excuse him beyond a certain extent; for his father, though as firm a believer in such agency as he, did not countenance the bloody and revengeful proceedings of the day. Unfortunately Cotton Mather did, much as he afterwards attempted to disclaim it. Probably his feelings and opinions on the subject were not well defined in his own mind; but every impartial reader sees, that, while he felt bound to give cautions, he gave

still more encouragement to the work of blood, and never wrote one syllable, expressing the least regret for the waste of innocent lives, though he confessed that the matter had been carried too far.

When Mr. Upham published his *Lectures* on this subject, he was called upon by a writer in the public prints, to make good his charge against Cotton Mather, of having exerted himself to increase and extend the frenzy of the public mind. He produced in reply, an original letter from Dr. Mather to Stephen Sewall of Salem, in which he manifests an excessive earnestness to prevent the excitement from subsiding. This was written in September, after the summer which had witnessed the executions in Salem, and contains an importunate request, that Mr. Sewall would furnish him with the evidence given at the trials. He urges this request, by reminding him of the benefit that may follow, and wishes him to add to it remarks and observations of his own. He tells him, that he must not consider himself writing to Cotton Mather, but to an obstinate unbeliever in all such matters, and he must adopt the tone and style most likely to make an impression on such a man. "Imagine me as obstinate a Sudducee and witch-advocate as any among us; address me as one that believed nothing reasonable; and when you have so knocked me down, in a spectre so unlike me, you will enable me to box it about among my

neighbors till it come, I know not where at last.”

It appears that he did *box it about among his neighbors*, with more success than could have been expected, after the revulsion of public feeling, which followed the transactions in Salem. In 1693, one Margaret Rule was seized in a remarkable manner, which he ascribed to spectral visitations. He says, that she had at some previous time shown symptoms of religious thoughtfulness; but he does not undertake to speak with confidence respecting her character, a forbearance, which implies that it was not irreproachable. She was assaulted by several cruel spectres, some of which had their faces covered, so that she could not be sure respecting them. They requested her to put down her name in a book, and, on her declining to subscribe, they tormented her in a cruel manner, at the command of a black man, who stood by, and appeared to be their master. She was thrown into such agonies, that Cotton Mather says, with much pathos, “they, that could behold the doleful condition of that poor family without sensible compassions, might have entrails indeed; but I am sure they could have no true bowels in them.”

He says, that to imagine that all this was imposture, would be an uncivil and unchristian thing. Indeed it is not necessary to the entire explanation of the affair, for he has thrown abundant light upon it when he assures his readers, that the young

woman fasted for nine days, her tormentors not allowing her to swallow any food all the while, except an occasional spoonful of rum. Whoever understands the relation between cause and effect, would readily believe in the witchcraft, after such a disclosure ; but it does not seem to occur to him, when he makes the statement, that the rum would help to account for any of the appearances ascribed to spectral visitation.

Calef thought it advisable to inquire into this affair, while it was in progress. Accordingly he attended in her chamber one night, when Cotton Mather and his father were there. The former conducted the examination by leading questions, such as this. " Do there a great many witches sit upon you ? " Answer ; " Yes." " The witches scratch, and pinch, and bite you, don't they ? " Answer, " Yes." This is a specimen of the whole investigation, which of course produced the answers desired. The questions to her attendants were also satisfactorily answered. " What does she eat and drink ? " Answer, " She eats nothing at all, but drinks rum." Soon after the clergymen withdrew, " the afflicted desired the women to be gone, saying, that the company of the men was not offensive to her, and having laid hold of the hand of a young man, said to have been her sweetheart formerly, who was withdrawing, she pulled him again into his seat, saying he should not go to-night."

Calef's interference gave offence to Cotton Mather, who complained much of his misrepresentation of the scene ; but on examining these alleged misrepresentations, it appears that Calef's statement is admitted to be substantially true. Calef proposed to Dr. Mather to meet with him and converse upon the subject ; but, instead of granting the interview, Cotton Mather caused him to be arrested for a libel, and bound over to answer at the sessions. A correspondence passed between them, but little to the satisfaction of either party.

One of the most remarkable documents brought forward was the testimony of several persons, who declared that they had seen her elevated in a surprising manner. If their evidence had stopped there, no one, who considered the nature of her diet, would have hesitated to believe them ; but they deposed, that they had seen her lifted up from her bed, without any exertion on her own part, and suspended in the air at a considerable height ; one account says, high enough to touch the garret floor without touching any support whatever. Several strong men were obliged to exert all their strength to pull her down.

Calef remarks on this testimony, that they should have stated the number of persons employed, in order to ascertain how many are required to overcome an invisible force. "On the whole," he says to Cotton Mather, "I suppose you expect I

should believe it; and, if so, the only advantage gained is, that that which has been so long controverted between Protestants and Papists, whether miracles are ceased, will hereby seem to be decided for the latter." Testimony of this kind, so explicit and so unaccountable, without taking it for granted that the witnesses were perjured, would probably have taken effect, even with the Salem history fresh in the public mind, had it not been for the firmness of Calef. Influence was against him, but truth and reason were so manifestly on his side, that, with small pretensions to learning, he overcame the divines in argument, and dispersed the remnants of delusion.

Mr. Upham has produced another letter, which, though the signature is wanting, was evidently from the style, and, as we are told, from the handwriting, the work of Cotton Mather. Like the former, it is addressed to Mr. Sewall, and describes the public manner in which he had been insulted in Boston. This was in 1707, several years after these events had taken place, but while he was yet in trouble from his controversy with Governor Dudley. He tells Mr. Sewall, that, one day in a bookseller's shop in Boston, he was railed at by a couple of malignant fellows, who, among other things, said, "His friend Mr. Noyes has cast him off;" on which they set up a shout of laughter. He wishes Mr. Sewall to show that part of the letter



to Mr. Noyes, in order to ascertain whether there was any truth in what they had said ; for, though he professed not to believe it, he thought it not impossible that there might be some foundation for the story.

The truth is, that he was suspicious and distrustful ; the public had accused him as the one, who had done most to mislead them, and his standing in society was suddenly changed. From being regarded as a man of great and venerable character, he was generally shunned and treated with aversion. Possibly this conversation was accidental, and had reference to some other person ; but, at any rate, the incident shows the state of his own feeling, and betrays a consciousness that he had lost his former place in the public respect and good-will.

The part of his Diary, which relates to this portion of his history is still preserved, and throws some light upon the subject of his own feelings and opinions. It is not, however, so full as could be desired. It seems to have been written after the excitement was over, when the subject was no longer pleasant to him. It is written with an attempt at self-justification, which shows either that he had misgivings at the time when he was most engaged, or that the altered feelings of those about him induced him to suspect and reëxamine his own.

In the beginning of the year 1692, he says, that his heart is set upon a design of reformation to extend through the churches, to revive the sinking spirit of piety, and prevent religion from declining. In order to produce this revival, he applied himself to the neighboring clergy; but they were in the habit of waiting for the agency of the divine spirit, and showed no disposition to join with him in taking the measures proposed. Finding that he must act alone, he wrote the publication entitled, "*A Midnight Cry.*" He says, "I set myself to recount the abasing circumstances of the land, and my soul mourned over them. I wrestled with my God, that he would awaken the churches to *do some remarkable thing* in returning to him." This language shows, that he was desirous to see some enthusiastic impulse given to the public mind, which should excite it to powerful action; and, when the panic of witchcraft came, he was doubtless prepared to welcome it as an answer to his prayer.

There is another memorandum on the 29th day of the second month, to this effect; "This day I obtained help of God, that he would make use of me as of a John, to be a herald of the Lord's kingdom now approaching." This evidently referred to the case of witchcraft, since the sentence concludes thus, "My prayers did especially insist upon the horrible enchantments and possessions

broke forth in Salem village, things of a most prodigious aspect; a good issue to those things, and my own direction and protection thereabout, I did especially petition for."

The rest of the Diary for this year is not dated, and, as has been said, is written in a singular spirit of self-defence. After commenting upon the manner in which, by the judgment of Heaven, evil spirits were permitted to torment unfortunate persons in Salem, he says, that many persons, of various characters, were accused and prosecuted upon the visions of the afflicted.

"For my own part," he adds, "I was always afraid of proceeding to convict and condemn any person, as a confederate with afflicting demons, upon so feeble an evidence as a spectral representation. Accordingly, I ever protested against it, both publicly and privately; and in my letters to the judges, I particularly besought them, "that they would by no means admit it; and when a considerable assembly of ministers gave in their advice about that matter, I not only concurred with them, but it was I who drew it up. Nevertheless, on the other side, I saw in most of the judges a most charming instance of prudence and patience, and I knew the exemplary prayer and anguish of soul wherewith they had sought the direction of Heaven above most other people; whom I generally saw enchanted into a raging, railing, scanda-

lous, and unreasonable disposition, as the distress increased upon us. For this cause, *though I could not allow the principles, that some of the judges had espoused*, yet I could not but speak honorably of their persons, on all occasions; and my compassion upon the sight of their difficulties, raised by my journeys to Salem, the chief seat of those diabolical vexations, caused me yet more to do so. And merely, as far as I can learn, for this reason, the mad people through the country, under a fascination on their spirits equal to that which *energumens* had on their bodies, reviled me as if I had been the doer of all the hard things that were done in the prosecutions of the witchcraft."

He appears to forget, that the "advice," of which he claims the authorship, contained not only cautions, but a recommendation to the authorities to prosecute vigorously those, who were under the charge of witchcraft. There is every reason to believe, that, had he spoken as doubtfully on all occasions, as he does in making this registry in his journal, the courts, not sustained by the clergy, would have suffered the matter to rest. It would be gratifying to see these things explained in any way creditable to his fame.

There may, however, have been a reason for his delicacy on this occasion, which one would have thought would have occurred to no one else, were it not for his assurance that it suggested itself sooner

to others than to him. It seems that this visitation of evil spirits was, in some sort, a personal attack upon himself, so that, as a party concerned, he could not decently be free in giving his opinion to the judges.

“ I had filled my country with little books,” he says, “ in several whereof I had, with a variety of entertainments, offered the new covenant, formally drawn up, unto my neighbors, hoping to engage them eternally unto the Lord by their subscribing with heart and hand unto that covenant. Now, in the late horrid witchcraft, the manner of spectres was, to tender books unto the afflicted people, soliciting them to subscribe a league with the devil therein exhibited, and so to become the servants of the devil for ever. Which when they refused, the spectres would proceed to wound them with scalding, burning, pinching, pricking, twisting, choking, and a thousand preternatural vexations. Before I made any such reflection myself, I heard the reflection made by others, who were more considerate, that this assault of the evil angels upon the country was intended by Hell, as a particular defiance unto *my poor endeavors* to bring the souls of men unto Heaven.”

It would seem impossible for credulity to go further than this, and, so far as the sincerity of his delusion is an excuse for his attempting to influence others with the same excitement, he is entitled to

the benefit of it all. But it seems, that his doubts grew upon him in later years; for his *Diary* contains this passage, dated the 15th day of the second month, 1713; "I entreated of the Lord, that I might know the meaning of that descent from the invisible world, which, nineteen years ago, produced, in a sermon from me, a good part of what is now published." This relates to the Salem witchcraft, and shows that the subject troubled him at times, long after the excitement had passed away.

He was very much annoyed with the letters of Calef, which were so civil and respectful in manner, that no complaint could be made of the form. The substance was so unanswerable as to be particularly trying. In 1701, he says, "I find that the enemies of the churches are set with an implacable enmity against me; and one vile tool, namely R. Calf, is employed by them to go on with more of his filthy scribbles, to hurt my precious opportunities of glorifying the Lord Jesus Christ. I had need to be much in prayer to my glorious Lord, that he would preserve his poor servant from the malice of this evil generation, and of that vile man particularly." It appears from this, that he considered all his persecutions from men or demons, as so many testimonies to his zealous exertions in the cause of religion; a view of the subject, which must have brought with it peculiar consolation



It would be unjust to Cotton Mather to leave this subject without mentioning an act recorded in his Diary, which shows that his thoughts sometimes reverted to Salem, perhaps with a touch of self-upbraiding, though he does not confess it. But whatever his motive may have been, the citizens of that ancient town will doubtless rejoice to preserve the memory of his benefactions. In the latter part of his life, he writes; "There is a town in this country, namely, Salem, which has many poor and bad people in it, and such as are especially scandalous for staying at home on the Lord's day. I wrapped up seven distinct parcels of money, and annexed seven little books about repentance, and seven of the monitory letter against profane absence from the house of God. I sent those things with a nameless letter unto the minister of that town, and desired and empowered him to dispense the charity in his own name, hoping thereby the more to ingratiate his ministry with the people. Who can tell how far the good angels of Heaven coöperate in these proceedings?"

## CHAPTER IV.

*Characteristic Extracts from his Diary.*—*His Vigils.* — *Description of the “Magnalia Christi Americana.”* — *Instances of his Enthusiasm.* — *A remarkable Courtship.* — *His Second Marriage.*

IN the Diary for 1696, is an entry dated the 23d day of the second month, which shows what kind of circumstances made most impression on his imagination, and what he thought it most important to record. “This evening I met with an experience, which it may not be unprofitable for me to remember. I had been for about a fortnight vexed with an extraordinary heart-burn, and none of all the common medicines would remove it, though for the present some of them would a little relieve it. At last, it grew so much upon me, that I was ready to faint under it. But under my fainting pain, this reflection came into my mind. There was *this* among the sufferings and complaints of my Lord Jesus Christ. My heart was like wax melted in the midst of my powels. Hereupon, I begged of the Lord, that, for the sake of the heart-burn undergone by my

Savior, I might be delivered from the other and lesser heart-burn wherewith I was now incommoded. Immediately it was darted into my mind, that I had Sir Philip Paris's plaster in my house, which was good for inflammations ; and laying the plaster on, I was cured of my malady."

All incidents of this kind were ascribed by him to a particular Providence, and his journal abounds with intimations and assurances received directly from Heaven. On the 22d day of the twelfth month, 1699, he says, " A terrible thing happened in my family ; for my daughter Katy, going into the cellar with a candle, her muslin ornaments about her shoulders took fire from it, and blazed up so as to set her head-gear likewise on fire. But, by the wonderful and merciful providence of God, her shriek for help was heard, and by that help the fire was extinguished. The child's life was preserved, and her head and face, though in the midst of horrible flames ; but her neck and hands were horribly burnt, and she was thrown into exquisite misery. My child fell into a fever, and her neck obliged her to so wry a posture of her head, that I was in grievous distress, whether she would live, or whether, if she did live, there would not be some visible mark of the stroke of the wrath of the Lord always upon her. I cried unto the Lord in this my distress, and I obtained assurance from Heaven, that the child should not only be shortly and safely

cured of her burning, but that God would make the burning to be the occasion of her being more effectually than ever brought home to himself."

Not only was information thus given, but he believed that interpositions of Heaven in his behalf were common and manifest, particularly in what related to his public labors. He says; "I often find, that when I preach on the angels, or on any subject, such as the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ, particularly agreeable to the angels, I have a more than ordinary assistance in my public ministrations. My mind, and voice, and strength are evidently under some special agency from the invisible world, and a notable fervency, and majesty, and powerful pungency set off my discourses."

There are many curious passages in his Diary, which show the peculiar nature of his devotions, and how firmly he expected, and perhaps in consequence of that expectation, found, an immediate answer to his prayers. In 1702, he began the practice of keeping vigils, that is, of spending whole nights in prayer.

"I called unto mind," says he, "that the primitive Christians, in obedience to that command of watching unto prayer, sometimes had their vigils; accordingly I resolved, that I would make some essay toward a vigil. I dismissed my dear consort unto her repose, and, in the dead of the night, I

retired into my study, and there, casting myself prostrate on my study floor before the Lord, I was rewarded with communications from Heaven, that cannot be uttered. There I lay for a long time, wrestling with the Lord, and I received some strange intimations from Heaven, about the time and the way of my death, and about mercies intended for my family, and several points, about which my mind may be too solicitous. Lord, what is man that thou visitest him? If those be vigils, I must, so far as the sixth commandment will allow, have some more of them."

The *intimations*, which he received on this occasion, were so direct and satisfactory, that the practice became a favorite one with him. Whatever service it may have done to his devotional feelings, it did not benefit his health or spirits; but he seems to have persevered in it to the last, notwithstanding some discouraging circumstances, that attended it. For example, immediately after this vigil, he writes; "Now, as I have often observed it, so it still continues matter of observation unto me, that, when I have been admitted to some near and sweet and intimate communion with Heaven, I must immediately encounter some vexation on earth; either bodily illness, or popular clamor, or Satanic buffets immediately followed. I expected something on this occasion. Accordingly, when I was preaching on the day

following, one of my chimneys took fire, and my own house, with my neighbors', was endangered, and a great congregation ran out of the meeting-house to the relief of my house, and I was thus marked out for talk all over the town."

'Thus it appears, that he was so much in the habit of looking for consequences of a certain kind, that the most trifling accidents were ascribed to special agency, and, if necessary, exalted into crosses and trials. It was an instance of rare moderation on the part of Satan, one would say, to satisfy his revenge by setting fire to a chimney; and there are few of the ills, which flesh is heir to, that may be regarded as lighter, than that of being the owner of a chimney, which occasioned such an alarm. But, as there was no other event near the vigil in the order of time, which could be ascribed to Satanic malice, this accident was compelled to officiate in that capacity, though it was hardly equal to the occasion

In 1704, he writes; "I am very much concerned about one thing. My little daughter, Nancy, has her unknown distemper still hanging about her. She languishes and perishes under a pain, which the ablest physicians in all the town confess themselves unable to cure. I cry to the Lord about it; yea, I have received over and over again a particular faith from Heaven, as I thought, that the child shall be recovered, and yet



the malady proceeds even to a hopeless extremity. Lord, what shall I think of this thing?"

Such was the reliance, which he placed on these intimations, he does not say in what manner conveyed, that he is very much perplexed to know how to reconcile the child's growing worse, with these promises made to him from on high. He speaks sometimes of sensible appearances; at others, he seems to have taken his own feelings, as direct suggestions of Heaven, and to have relied upon them as firmly, as if they had been spoken by an angel's articulate voice. About a fortnight after, he writes; "Now again I see, that faith is not fancy. My little daughter, Nancy, is wonderfully recovered. The Lord showed us how to encounter her malady. The child is got abroad again, perfectly recovered from any sign of her late sickness, and her strength comfortably returns to her."

He had another proof, quite acceptable to an author, that faith is not fancy. In 1701, he writes; "This day I received letters from London. My church history is a bulky thing, of about two hundred and fifty sheets. The impression will cost about six hundred pounds. The booksellers of London are cold about it. Their proposals for subscriptions are of uncertain and tedious event. But behold what my friend, Mr. Bromfield, writes me from London. 'There is

one Mr. Robert Hackshaw, a very serious and godly man, who proposes to print the Ecclesiastical History of New England, which you entrusted me withal. He is willing to print it at his own charges, and to serve you with as many books, I believe, as you desire. When he proposed it to me, I said, Sir, God has answered Mr. Mather's prayers. He declared, that he did it, not with any expectation of gain to himself, but for the glory of God.' "

This was the *MAGNALIA*, a chaotic collection of materials for a history of New England, rather than a history itself; a work, which contains so much that is valuable, that it is read with interest and pleasure still, though it is deformed by some enormous faults, and not to be trusted as a guide in matters of importance.\* Cotton Mather was generally allowed to know more particulars of the history of New England than any other man; and had his other qualifications as an historian been proportionate to his curiosity and industry, he might have raised a durable monument to his own fame. But the portion of history, which it embraced, was so near his own times, as to awaken

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\* The work is entitled, "*MAGNALIA CHRISTI AMERICANA, or the Ecclesiastical History of New England.*" It was published in London, in the year 1702, making a large folio volume. It was reprinted at Hartford, Connecticut, 1820, in two volumes octavo.

his partialities and aversions, so that in many of his sketches of character, we have little more than a view of his own prejudices. The times, too, were credulous, and he even more so than the times. Hence the marvellous was often quite as welcome to him as the true.

As to dates, it was not to be expected, that any man could despatch in a few years a work, which was large enough to be the labor of a life, without falling into various errors in matters, which he doubtless regarded as of very small importance. Grahame calls the *Magnalia* the most interesting work, which the literature of this country has produced, declaring that many of the biographical parts of it are superior to Plutarch; but this is absurd and extravagant praise; the highest pretension of the work is, that it is curious and entertaining.

The *Magnalia* is divided into seven books, or parts. The first part contains the history of New England, with a description of the design *whereon*, the manner *wherein*, and the people *whereby*, the colonies were planted. This is followed by a set of portraits of the public men and divines, who had distinguished themselves in the country. He then gives an account of Harvard College, which had not yet had the opportunity to displease him. From this, he proceeds to the articles of faith and rules of discipline, which prevailed in the churches.

The sixth book was that, in which his soul delighted, because it recorded the manifestations of Divine Providence in connexion with the wonders of the invisible world. The last book contains an account of the disturbances, which the New England colonies suffered from Indians, Quakers, and wolves in sheep's clothing, who were grouped together in an unheard-of association, as so many allies in opposition to the cause of God.

This work, which it was formerly difficult to procure, has been made so familiar in modern times, by a cheap edition, that it needs no particular description. Every one knows its general character, and its quaintness recommends it to those who read for amusement, while it is fallen into disrepute with those who read for instruction. The miscellaneous scraps of learning, strung together on invisible threads of association, make the reader wonder at his industry, however misapplied; and occasional gleams of talent assure him, that the author was really an able man, apart from his affectation. It is like an antiquarian collection, the value of which must not be estimated by its usefulness, but by the more doubtful standard of its oddity and its age.

How far he sometimes carried his peculiar enthusiasm, appears from a memorandum dated the 23d day of the sixth month, 1702. He says, that when sitting in his study, he perceived a

strange impression on his mind, that God was willing to converse with him after a very familiar manner, if he would look and wait in a proper posture. It was actually said to him, "Go into your great chamber, and I will speak with you." He immediately went to a large apartment, the most retired in his house, and there threw himself prostrate on the floor. "There," he says, "I cried unto the Lord, with humble and bitter confessions of my own loathsomeness before him. I abhorred myself as worthy to be thunderstruck in dust and ashes."

For a time he perceived nothing out of the common course ; but at length there came an extraordinary *afflatus*, which dissolved him in tears, that ran down upon the floor. He burst forth with such expressions as this ; "And now my heavenly Father is going to tell me what he will do for me. My Father loves me, and will fill me with his love, and will bring me unto everlasting life. My Father will never permit any thing to befall me, but what shall be for his interest. My Father will make me a chosen vessel to do good in the world. My Father will yet use me to glorify his church ; and my opportunities, my precious opportunities to do good, shall be after a special manner increased and multiplied. The condition of my dear consort, my Father will give me to see his wonderful favor in it. My Father

will be a father to my children too. He will provide for them, and they shall, every one, serve him through eternal ages." This conversation with Heaven, he describes as leaving a heavenly, sweet, and gracious impression on his soul.

This reference to the condition of his wife, was on account of a lingering sickness, of which, after much suffering, she died in the year 1702. It is recorded in his Diary, that, after she had been sick about half a year, he fasted and prayed on her account ; and that same night, there appeared to her, she supposed in her sleep, a grave person leading a woman in the most meagre and wretched state. She broke forth into praising God, that her condition was so much more tolerable, than that woman's. The grave person then told her, that she had two distressing symptoms, for which he would point out some relief. For the intolerable pain in her breast, he told her to take the warm wool from a living sheep, and lay it upon the part affected. For the salivation, which nothing had relieved, he told her to take a tankard of spring water, and dissolve in it over the fire a quantity of isinglass and mastic, of which she was to drink often. She communicated this vision to her physician ; he advised her to try the experiment. She did so for a time with singular success. She was even able to leave her chamber ; but her disorder was too deeply fixed, and



in December it became evident, that she must die. His account of her death is affecting.

“The black day arrives! I had never seen so black a day in all the time of my pilgrimage. The desire of my eyes is this day to be taken from me. Her death is lingering and painful. All the forenoon of this day, she was in the pangs of death, and sensible till the last minute or two before her final expiration. I cannot remember the discourse that passed between us; only her devout soul was full of satisfaction about her going to a state of blessedness with the Lord Jesus Christ. As far as my distress would permit, I studied to confirm her satisfaction and consolation. When I saw to what a point of resignation I was called of the Lord, I resolved, with his help, to glorify him. So, two hours before she expired, I kneeled by her bedside, and took into my hands that dear hand, the dearest in the world, and solemnly and sincerely gave her up to the Lord. I gently put her out of my hands and laid away her hand, resolved that I would not touch it again. She afterwards told me, that she signed and sealed my act of resignation; and before that though she had called for me continually, after it, she never asked for me any more. She conversed much until near two in the afternoon. The last sensible word that she spoke was to her weeping father; ‘Heaven, Heaven will make amends for all!’”

A passage, which follows hard upon this, is written with the same solemnity, while the subject is ludicrous in the extreme. It shows his want of taste ; his mind hardly seemed to discover any difference of magnitude and proportion between any two subjects, that happened to come before it. Shortly after the death of his wife, as he was reflecting upon the follies to which persons situated as he was are frequently led, he prayed earnestly that God would sooner kill him, than suffer him to do any thing that would bring discredit upon the religion which he professed. He assures us, that, a few minutes after, he was taken very ill, and was not a little alarmed ; for, said he, " I suspected that the Lord was going to take me at my word." The disorder did not prove fatal ; he soon recovered ; and then, as if perfectly unable to discover any thing otherwise than serious in the subject, says, " I perceived it was nothing but vapors."

In the month of February, he records, that he was beset with " a very astonishing trial." Others might have been disposed to smile at it, but he evidently considered it no subject of mirth. It dwelt upon his mind, and troubled him so that his life became almost a burden. There was a young lady, whom he describes as so remarkably accomplished, that no one in America exceeded her, abounding in wit and sense, with a comely aspect, and most winning conversation, who, after writing

to him once or twice, made him a visit, and gave him to understand, that she had long felt a deep interest in his ministry, and that, since his present condition had given her more liberty to think of him, "she had become charmed with my person to such a degree, that she could not but break in upon me with her most importunate requests, that I would make her mine." She however declared, that the chief interest she felt in the attachment arose from her desire for religious improvement; for, if she were once connected with him, she did not doubt that her salvation would be secured.

To a proposal so direct and flattering, it was not easy to make any other than a grateful reply. It was not altogether to his taste, but he could not say so to her. All at once, a way of escape seemed to be offered; and, nothing doubting that it would answer the purpose, he told her of his austere manner of life, and the frequent fasts and vigils, which his wife was expected to share. But, instead of being daunted by this communication, she told him that this was the very thing of all others, which she desired; for she had already weighed all those discouragements, but was prepared with faith and fortitude to encounter them all.

"Then," he says, "I was in a great strait how to treat so polite a gentlewoman, thus applying herself unto me. I plainly told her I feared whether her proposal would not meet with unsurmountable

objections from those, who had an interest in disposing of me. However I desired that there might be time taken to see what would be the wisest and fittest resolution. In the mean time, if I could not make her my own, I should be glad to be any way instrumental in making her the Lord's."

Having secured this reprieve, he seemed to breathe freely, though he was utterly unable to discover any way of escape from this affectionate persecution.

This matter appears for some time to have oppressed his very soul, and the manner in which he treats it is too characteristic to be passed by. After a time, the Diary proceeds; "My sore distresses and temptations I this day carried before the Lord. The chief of them lies in this. The most accomplished gentlewoman, mentioned, though not by name, in the close of the former year, one whom everybody sees with admiration, confessed to be, for her charming accomplishments, an incomparable person, addressing me to make her mine, and professing a disposition unto the most holy flights of religion to lie at the bottom of her addresses, I am in the greatest strait imaginable what course to steer. Nature itself causes in me a mighty tenderness towards a person so amiable. Breeding requires me to treat her with honor and respect, and very much of deference; but religion, above all, obliges me, instead of a rash rejecting of her

conversation, to contrive rather how I may imitate the goodness of the Lord Jesus Christ, in the dealing with such as are upon a conversion to him." No contrivance could arrange the matter to his mind ; for again he says, " As for my special, soul-harassing affair, I did, some days ago, under my hand, beg, as for my life, that it might be desisted from, and that I might not be killed by hearing any more about it." But even his written solicitations produced no effect, so desirous was she to secure the welfare of her soul.

To add to his trouble, his relations, suspecting some attachment to exist between him and the lady, treated him as if the engagement was already formed. So intolerable was their upbraiding, that he says, " My grievous distresses, occasioned especially by the late addresses made unto me by the person formerly mentioned, cause me to fall down before the Lord with prayers and tears continually. And because my heart is sore pained within me, what shall I do, or what shall be the issue of this distressing affair? "

Some light began to be thrown upon this subject, but, though recorded by his hand, it does not appear to have explained any thing to him. He goes on with the registry, with the same blending of simplicity and self-applause.

" First month, 6th day, 1703. That young gentlewoman, of so fine accomplishments, that there

is none in this land comparable to her, who has, with such repeated importunity pressed my respects unto her, that I have had much ado to keep clear of great inconveniences, hath, by the disadvantage of the company which commonly resorted to her father's house, got but a bad name among the generality of people. There appears no possibility of her speedy recovery from it, be her carriage never so virtuous. By an unhappy coincidence of some circumstances, there is a noise, and a mighty noise it is, made about the town, that I am engaged in a courtship to that young gentlewoman; and, though I am so very prudent, and have aimed so much at a conformity with our Lord Jesus Christ, yet it is not easy prudently to confute the rumor." Upon this he gathered all his energies for a decisive blow. "The design of Satan to entangle me in a match, that might have proved ruinous to my family or my ministry, is deferred by my resolution totally to reject the addresses of the young gentlewoman. I struck the knife into the heart of my sacrifice, by a letter unto her mother."

In this curious history it appears, that, while he had no particular regard for the lady, he was not insensible to her professed admiration for him. He does not perceive, that, while he delays, he is giving encouragement to her, and affording a sub-



ject of remark to others. Nor does he seem to suspect, from first to last, that her zeal for the interest of her soul may have been counterfeited, as a pretext for approaching him. The course of conduct, which he praised in himself as so wise and prudent, was so extremely unguarded, that he was fortunate indeed, not to have been unconsciously entangled in an engagement from which there was no escaping.

Though the decided stand, which he had taken in self-defence, released him from the lady's addresses, it does not seem to have restored peace to his soul. A fortnight after he writes ; " Was ever man more tempted than the miserable Mather ? Should I tell in how many forms the devil has assaulted me, and with what subtlety and energy his assaults have been carried on, it would strike my friends with horror. Sometimes temptations to vice, to blasphemy and atheism, and the abandonment of all religion as a mere delusion, and sometimes to self-destruction itself ; these, even these, do follow thee, O miserable Mather, with astonishing fury. But I fall down into the dust on my study floor, with tears, before the Lord ; and then they quickly vanish, and it is fair weather again. Lord, what wilt thou do with me ? "

In one respect he was more fortunate than could have been expected ; for, as he has intimated, the

attachment was made a subject of common conversation, and was carried about in a form not flattering or favorable to him. After complaining bitterly of the manner in which he is misrepresented, he says; "God strangely appears for me in this point also, by disposing the young gentlewoman, with her mother, to furnish me with their assertions that I have never done any unworthy thing. Yea, they have proceeded so far beyond all bounds in my vindication, as to say, that they verily look on Mr. M——r to be as great a saint as any upon earth. Nevertheless, the devil owes me a spite, and he inspires his people in this town to whisper impertinent stories."

The perplexity, into which he was thrown, had a strong effect upon his ill-regulated mind; and his friends, apprehensive of the consequences, urged him to marry again. Seeing how much his family of young children suffered for the want of a mother, "he looked to Heaven to heal the breach, that had been made in his household." Samuel Mather, who says very little of the first wife, is more diffuse on the subject of the second, who had the honor of being his mother. His father's petitions, he says, "were abundantly answered. God showed him a gentlewoman, a near neighbor, whose character I give, as I had it from those who intimately knew her. She was one of finished piety

and probity, and of unspotted reputation ; one of good sense, and blessed with a complete discretion in ordering a household ; one of singular good humor, and incomparable sweetness of temper ; one with a very handsome and engaging countenance, and honorably descended and related. 'T was Mrs. Elizabeth Hubbard ; she had been a widow four years, when Dr. Mather married her, which was August 18th, 1703. He rejoiced in her, as having found great spoil."

From this time, not however on account of this connexion, his condition began to change. The decline of that respect and consideration, with which he had been regarded, began to make itself felt. He was at open enmity with the government, and was not sustained, as the antagonists of ruling powers are apt to be, by the sympathy and affection of the people. They, having learned to charge him with the guilt of misleading them on former occasions, were no longer disposed to follow his guidance, nor even to treat him with common respect and regard. This was sufficiently irritating to one like him, who had been accustomed to live on applause, and was almost famished without it.

When to this was added the evil of an unpromising household of children, some of whom, though qualified by nature to be his glory, were fated to

oe his sorrow and shame, it is easy to see how dreary and depressing his closing years must have been. Even his piety, which, though strangely expressed, was no doubt sincere, depended so much on evidences and manifestations, that it was more likely to see, in these changes, signs of the displeasure, than of the trials and chastening, of the Most High.

## CHAPTER V.

*Governor Dudley.—Disappointment of Cotton Mather at not being chosen President of Harvard College.—His extraordinary Letter to Governor Dudley.—His Belief in the special Interpositions of Providence.—Elected a Fellow of the Royal Society.—Received the Degree of Doctor of Divinity.—His Domestic Afflictions.*

IN 1702, Joseph Dudley was appointed governor of Massachusetts. He was strongly attached to New England, though he was not disposed to favor popular claims. When Andros was governor, he held the offices of chief justice and president of the council, and was severely handled at the time of Andros's fall. He was then appointed chief justice of New York; but he could not rest, till he obtained some commission in Massachusetts, which was the object of his desire and ambition, and was pursued, as was generally thought, with too little regard to the means employed. He was long engaged in soliciting the appointment, and did not receive it till 1702, when he had the address to procure a letter from Cotton Mather in his favor, which, being exhibited in England, removed the

objections of the King, and was supposed to be the cause of his appointment to the chair.

He found, on his arrival, that he had a difficult part to act. On the one hand he was to secure the prerogative of the crown, and on the other he desired the favor of the people. This occasioned a conflict of purpose and action ; but, finding it impossible to please both sides, he resolved to keep on good terms with the fountain of honor and power. In order to do this, he was obliged to assert his own prerogative in the first place ; and, whereas Sir William Phips had been under the influence of some of the leading clergy, and Lord Bellamont's popularity saved him from the necessity of taking such decided ground, Governor Dudley was compelled to enter upon a course of claims and conduct, which were new to the people.

The first step was to release himself from the clergy, whom he treated with respect, while he steadily refused to consult them. This was not pleasant to the Mathers, who conceived themselves entitled to consideration, the father from his public, the son from his personal services, and who were not prepared for the sudden change from unbounded respect and confidence to alienation and disregard.

The early years of his administration were full of trouble, arising partly from the unprosperous state of the country, and partly from his collision



with the representatives of the people, who steadily opposed him in all his public designs. A letter written by his son, Paul Dudley, the attorney-general, was transmitted from England, in which he remarked, "The government and college are disposed of here in chimney-corners and private meetings, as confidently as can be. This country will never be worth living in for lawyers and gentlemen, till the charter is taken away. My father and I sometimes talk of the Queen's establishing a court of chancery in this country." This letter, taken in connexion with the governor's course of conduct, made him so unpopular, that many attempts were made to remove him, but without success.

One circumstance, which was diligently used to his disadvantage, gave his enemies the opportunity to charge him with treasonable communication with the French, with whom the English were then at war. A person, who was sent to Nova Scotia to negotiate an exchange of prisoners, returned with a very small number, and was immediately charged with having spent his time in trading with the enemy, and supplying them with military stores, instead of attending to the business of his mission. Some merchants of note were also accused, and brought to trial with him, and all were found guilty.

At the same time a memorial to the Queen, signed by Nathaniel Higginson and several others,

some in Boston and others in London, charged Governor Dudley with participating in the guilt of these transactions. The Council and House of Representatives at once passed votes declaring their persuasion, that the charges were false ; but, such was his unpopularity, that it was with the utmost difficulty he was able to maintain his ground.

In 1707, at the death of Samuel Willard, President of Harvard College, if learning alone had been a sufficient qualification, Cotton Mather would have been selected to fill the vacancy ; and he was so confident of receiving the appointment, that he observed days of fasting, after his usual manner, to solicit the divine direction. But Governor Dudley prevailed on Judge Leverett, who was one of his Council, and in every respect fitted for the trust, to accept the office, which he filled with usefulness and honor for many years. This appointment was a signal to the Mathers, that their influence was at an end, and they made no secret of their displeasure. While President Leverett was in the chair, they seldom, if ever, attended the meetings of the Overseers. Cotton Mather was not honored with a place in the Corporation ; while he was compelled to see Dr. Colman and Mr. Brattle, men with whom he was not on friendly terms, members of that board, and holding the concerns of the institution in their own control.

Though many, who admired the attainments of

Cotton Mather, were disappointed at his not receiving the charge of the College, the general sentiment approved the conduct of Governor Dudley in passing him by ; not from any disposition to underrate him, but from a conviction, apparently well-founded, that in judgment, prudence, and practical ability, he was inferior to others, who were not to be compared with him for learning. In fact the public feeling, in the latter part of Dudley's administration, took a turn in his favor. His ability, patriotism, and engaging manners made friends of many, who had been strongly opposed to him in politics, and he was generally admitted to hold a high place among the useful and eminent men of the country.

A passage found in Cotton Mather's Diary, dated June 16th, 1702, shows what kind of language he thought himself authorized to hold to the governor, and how much he was exasperated to find his counsels disregarded.

"I received a visit from Governor Dudley. Among other things that I said to him, I used these words ; ' Sir, you arrive to the government of a people, that have their various and divided apprehensions about many things, and particularly about your own government over them. I am humbly of opinion, that it will be your wisdom to carry an indifferent hand to all parties, if I may use so coarse a word as parties, and to give occasion

to none to say, that any have monopolized you, or that you took your measures from them alone. I will explain myself with the freedom and the justice, though not perhaps with the prudence, which you would expect from me. I will do no otherwise than I would be done to. I should be content, I would approve and commend it, if any one should say to your Excellency, By no means let any people have cause to say, that you take all your measures from the two Mr. Mathers. By the same rule I may say without offence, By no means let any people say, that you go by no measures in your conduct but Mr. Byfield's and Mr. Leverett's. This I speak, not from any personal prejudice against the gentlemen ; but from a due consideration of the disposition of the people, and as a service to your Excellency.' The wretch went unto those men, and told them that I had advised him to be no ways advised by them ; and inflamed them into an implacable rage against me."

Whatever degree of prudence the governor expected from Cotton Mather's reputation for that virtue, it cannot be regarded as surprising, that he should have taken this choice speech as a warning against Leverett and Byfield, nor that he should have felt as if there was something too assuming in such dictation from such a quarter. He probably did not put himself often in the way of so free a counsellor ; and the alienation, combined with

other causes, created so much discontent in Cotton Mather, that, in 1707, he addressed a letter to Governor Dudley, which seems intended for no other purpose, than to express his own displeasure.

He begins this long and singular production by telling the governor, that he feels it to be his duty to give him some words of faithful advice ; and this is what he proposes to do. Having heard that the governor had done him injuries, his purpose is to return good for evil. He assures his Excellency, that a letter from himself, read to King William, had been the means of placing him in the chair of state ; and, if he never received any thanks for it, he had at least received all that he expected.

He would have Governor Dudley call to mind what he had said to him in former days. The whole country knew his efforts to lead the chief magistrate to a right discharge of duty. But it was all in vain. Had it been otherwise, he never would have known the meaning of a "troubled sea." But now it is evident, that the Lord has a controversy with him ; and the best office of love, that can be done, is to show him wherein his ways have displeased the Lord.

This office of love Cotton Mather performs in a very hearty manner, and without the least manifest reluctance. He tells his Excellency, that the

chief difficulty he has to contend with is covetousness, the thing which a ruler should hold in most aversion. When a man makes his government an engine to enrich himself, and does many base and dishonorable things for the sake of gain, it excludes him from the kingdom of Heaven, and sometimes from his worldly station. It was known, that he once said to Sir William Phips, that the office might be made worth twelve hundred a year; to which Phips replied, that it could not be done by an honest man; but now it appears how the thing is done.

He also tells the governor, that, to his own knowledge, he has been guilty of bribery and corruption. Besides, the infamous things done by his son reflect dishonor on him, because it is known, that they are intimately associated in all that they do. The Pagans themselves condemned such proceedings, but Christians in high office are seen practising what they condemned as the worst of crimes. This is pernicious to the Queen's government, but far more so to the man who is guilty, because there is one requisite of saving repentance, with which he can never bring himself to comply, and that is, restitution.

He then goes on to charge the government with having carried on an unlawful trade with the enemies of his country. The circumstances are known, but it is feared, that, when an investiga-



tion takes place, the disgrace will be greater than it is now. The attempt to cover the transaction by a forced vote of the Council will not shield him. He then charges the governor with having libelled the people of New England in his official despatches to England. He also recounts the military enterprises of the existing administration; Church, sent against Port Royal, but secretly forbidden to take it, and the forces retreating from it as if they were afraid of its being surrendered. These proceedings, to say nothing of the expense, bring a shame on the country, that will not soon be forgotten.

He tells the governor, that, in all civil affairs, he is irregular, impatient, and not the least reliance can be placed upon his word. Sometimes he asserts a thing with great vehemence, and soon after, if any indirect purpose is to be answered, he asserts the contrary with equal decision. The Council are not allowed to deliberate; they are hurried, forced, and driven; and when they are thus pushed into unjust measures, the governor says they are wholly owing to the Council. A day is sometimes appointed for the election of justices; it is often privately altered, and an earlier one appointed, when none are present but those whose company is desired.

These things being so, it must needs be, that the governor is under the divine displeasure. There is a judgment to come, when he will be

required to answer for the manner in which his duties were performed. Considering his age and health, his Excellency ought to lose no time in thinking seriously on this subject, and applying for the divine mercy.

Finally, Cotton Mather declares, that no usage shall ever induce him to lay aside the feelings of love and kindness, which he thinks it his duty to maintain with all mankind. He has often been silent, when he felt strongly tempted to speak ; he has been neglected and treated with contempt and aversion ; those who visited him have been insulted, though that act of attention was all their sin ; even those who live in the same part of the town have been proscribed for that and no other transgression ; but he cherishes no resentment ; he forgets and forgives all injuries, and prays that the governor may have an old age full of good fruits and a blessing in both worlds.

Such was the tenor of this courteous communication, which had evidently been prepared for, by a long series of mortifications ; not probably intended on the governor's part, but still felt and resented as if each one was aimed at the heart.

This letter was accompanied with another of the same date, also addressed to the governor, by Increase Mather, and written in the same tone with that of his son. The governor answered both at once, saying that he was not so destitute

of the Christian temper, as not to be willing to receive admonitions and reproofs addressed to him in a proper spirit, but such as theirs did not answer to that description. Their address, he says, would have been insolent, if addressed to the humblest man, and, when directed to the chief magistrate of the State, was quite insufferable. He thought, that, when admonitions were given, the facts charged should be matters of proof, not mere suspicion ; that the reproof should be administered with meekness, not contempt ; and given, moreover, when the adviser is in a good temper, and not influenced by prejudice, wrath, and ill-will.

As to their charges, they have been very credulous, if they believed them ; but, if they were all true, their spirit and manner would be quite as unjustifiable. He does not answer their accusations, which would take more time than he has to spare ; he exhorts them not to disturb the peace of the province by their seditious harangues, but to suffer the other clergymen, men in every respect as good as they, to have a share in the government of the College. This seems to have been the chief difficulty ; for the governor says to them, that either that institution must be disposed of according to their opinion, and against that of all the rest of the clergy, or the chief magistrate must be torn in pieces

Cotton Mather does not say a word in relation to the College, but his father speaks of the College charter, which he says might have been confirmed by the royal government, if Governor Dudley had done his duty.

The breach between the governor and Cotton Mather was never healed ; and the latter apprehended, that the man in office would make him feel the effects of his displeasure. In 1709, there are several allusions to the governor in his Diary. On one occasion, when speaking of a day of fasting and prayer, he says, that he supplicated, that he might be saved from the malice of the governor and council, who suspected him to have been the author of a work lately arrived from England, in which their criminal mismanagement was exposed to public censure. Again he says, "The other ministers of the town are this day feasting with our wicked governor. I have, by my provoking plainness and freedom, in telling this Ahab of his wickedness, procured myself to be left out of his invitations. I rejoiced in my liberty from the temptations, wherewith they were encumbered. I set apart the day for fasting with prayer, and the special intention of the day was to obtain deliverance and protection from my enemies. I mentioned their names unto the Lord, who has promised to be my shield. I sang agreeable psalms, and left my cause with the Lord."

Nothing could exceed his confidence in the immediate efficacy of such prayer for temporal blessings. In the same year, he remarks that he had taken a violent cold, from exposure in bad weather, and was threatened with a fever. Instead of resorting to the usual remedies, he says, "I set apart the day for fasting and prayer with abundant alms. I sang the beginning of the forty-first psalm, and my malady vanished beyond expectation." The consequences of neglecting to pray were equally direct. He records, that, about the same time, his son Nathaniel, an infant, was sick, and he neglected to pray for him as fervently as he ought. The consequence was, that the child died, and the father reproached himself, as if he was persuaded that its life might have been easily saved, if he had attended to his duty.

There was no case whatever, to which this kind of supplication did not apply. In the same year he takes notice of an incident, which he calls a very particular effect of prayer.

"Though I am furnished with a very great library," said he, "yet, seeing a library of a late minister in the town was to be sold, and a certain collection of books therein, which had in it, may be, above six hundred single sermons, I could not forbear wishing to be made able to compass such a treasure. I could not forbear mentioning my

wishes in my prayers, before the Lord, that, in case it might be of service to his interests, he would enable me, in his good Providence, to purchase the treasure now before me. But I left the matter before him with the profoundest resignation, willing to be without every thing, which he should not order for me. Behold ! a gentleman, who a year ago treated me very ill, (but I cheerfully forgave him,) carried me home to dine with him, and, upon an accidental mention of the library aforesaid, compelled me to accept of him a sum of money, which enabled me to come at what I had been desirous of."

He could not have had means of his own to spare for such a purpose ; for, at the same time, he records, that, owing to the largeness of his family, he was in such wants and straits, that he was, literally speaking, in rags, and his children were no better arrayed.

This special interposition, as he deemed it, sometimes gave him light upon the subject of political movements, which agitated the country. As New England was deeply interested in the national quarrels with France, and compelled more than once to fight the battles of Great Britain, the people here naturally watched the proceedings of the two nations with an anxious interest, which was increased by the difficulty and delay of sending intelligence across the sea.



He says, in 1703, "The 24th day, second month, was a fast, in which I enjoyed considerable assistance. In my sermon, I let fall these words. 'I have much reason to suspect that a war is breaking out in Europe. In the late peace of Ryswick, the wind came not about the right way. There must be another storm and war, before all clearness. If it should be so, there is reason to suspect that the French oppressor, who wants nothing but New England to render him the master of all America, and has been under provocation enough to fall foul upon us, may, before we do so much as hear of a war proclaimed, swallow us up.' Three days after this, arrived very surprising intelligence indeed, which represented unto us all Europe in a new flame, and the union between France and Spain. The nations are in a most prodigious convulsion. Great Britain, particularly, is in extreme hazard and ferment, and the plantations are in a very hazardous condition."

He never was able to contemplate foreign or domestic politics with any satisfaction, till the accession of Governor Shute. Whether his partiality for him was personal or political, does not appear, but his registry in 1717 affords a strong contrast to his memorials of the days of Governor Dudley. He writes, "Our excellent governor, who has delivered the country from a flood of corruptions, which was introduced by selling places,

is to be encouraged ; and a course must be taken, that he may be vindicated from the aspersions of a cursed crew in this place, who traduce him as guilty of that iniquity."

But his notice of the College at the same time is written in a different tone. "*July 3d.* This day, being the Commencement as they call it, a time of much resort into Cambridge, and sorrily enough thrown away, I chose to remain at home, and I set apart a good part of it unto prayer, that the College, which is on many accounts in a very neglected and unhappy condition, and has been betrayed by vile practices, may be restored unto better circumstances, and be such a nursery of piety, industry, and all erudition, as that the churches may see therein the compassion of the Lord Jesus unto them." It will be seen hereafter, that the College never rose in his esteem. At the time when he wrote these words, it was supposed by all others to have an uncommon measure of peace and prosperity within its walls.

The year 1713 brought an unusual variety of incidents to him and to his family, some of them welcome, others severely trying. Among the latter class may be set down the circumstance, that a new church was formed, or, as he expresses it, *swarmed* from his own ; a movement which became necessary from the crowded state of the house, but which appears to have been very unpleasant to

him. Possibly he was vexed, that any were willing to leave him ; or it may have been, that some of those, who separated, were the most valuable members of his society. He makes constant reference to this matter in his Diary, till the arrangements are entirely completed, and praises himself repeatedly for the judicious, conciliating, and excellent course, which he was enabled to pursue

This praise, however, was not awarded him by all concerned. There is an interesting journal of Mr. Barnard of Marblehead, which it is understood will soon be published, in which he gives a full account of the proceedings of Cotton Mather and his father. Mr. Barnard says, that the new house was intended for himself ; but that Cotton Mather addressed the members of the society privately, and used all kinds of machinations to induce them to pass over him, and to select another. In this attempt he succeeded ; but, according to Mr. Barnard, many men of influence severely condemned his conduct on the occasion. Nor did it pass without its retribution ; for, afterwards, the clergyman, for whom the Mathers had interested themselves, proved contumacious, and gave them cause to regret his election. Then they lamented their intrigue when too late, and wished that they could get rid of him, and have Mr. Barnard in his stead. It is not safe to rely wholly on the statements of the most respectable witnesses, in

cases where they are personally concerned. Cotton Mather does not speak of Mr. Barnard in his Diary, and probably did not think himself presuming, when he gave his sentiments freely to those, who were at the time a portion of his own people.

In the eighth month he records, that he received letters from the Secretary of the Royal Society, who told him that his *Curiosa Americana* had been read before that body ; and, so well satisfied were they with it, that they presented to him, in acknowledgment, the thanks of the Society. They also signified their wish and intention to admit him a member of the Society ; and he was assured, that at their next lawful meeting he should be regularly admitted. This, says the Diary, “is a marvellous favor of Heaven to me ; a most surprising favor.”

There were many in New England, who, according to his son, “were so foolish and impudent as to doubt, nay, to deny his right to that title.” They gave as a reason, that his name was not included among the published members of the Royal Society. His son explains it by saying, that, though any of his Majesty’s subjects, in any of his dominions, might be members of that Society, they could not have their names on the list, if they were absent. Foreigners were exempted from this necessity ; but it was not accorded to English, or Americans, without their passing

through the ceremony of a formal admission. He also says, that, whenever his father received letters from members of that Society, they always gave him his title as one of their number. The subject seems to be decided by the Secretary's words ; " As for your being chosen a member of the Royal Society, that has been done, both by the Council and body of that Society ; only the ceremony of admission is wanting ; which, you being beyond the sea, cannot be performed."

He also received the degree of Doctor of Divinity from the University of Glasgow, accompanied with letters, which expressed to him the high respect in which he was held in Great Britain. His son establishes his right to this honor, by quoting from the oration of the renowned Zanchy, who said, " Who can reject whom God hath promoted ? Who can deny the title of doctor to him, whom God has endowed with such excellent gifts as are worthy of a doctor indeed ?" The same, he says, " may be said concerning Mr. Mather. When he was worthy of the doctorate, why should he not have it ? "

He does not seem to have been insensible to these distinctions. It is said, that some of his friends advised him to wear his signet ring, as a token and assertion of his being a doctor of divinity ; not out of any vanity of ornament, but out of obedience to the fifth commandment. This

commandment was never before thought broad enough to cover such a case, but it was sufficient to weigh with him. "The Doctor therefore would wear this ring; and made this action, so seemingly inconsiderable, a great engine of religion." "The emblem on the Doctor's signet is a tree, with Psalm i. 3, written under it, and about it, *Glascua rigavit*. The cast of his eye upon this, constantly provoked him to pray, 'O God make me a very fruitful tree, and help me to bring forth seasonable fruit continually.'"

A notice taken in his Diary of a contemplated journey to Ipswich, while it shows, that in his day a ride of that distance was a serious affair, manifests the sorrow, with which the vanity of others sometimes filled him, and at the same time proves in a striking manner the absence of it from his own breast.

"I have some thoughts concerning taking a journey to Salem and Ipswich, within a week or two, having there a very great opportunity to glorify my Savior, and to edify his people. I therefore carried the whole affair before the Lord, that all the circumstances of it may be ordered in very faithfulness; and particularly that the fond expectations of the people, flocking in great multitudes to hear me, may not provoke the Lord any way to leave me to confusion, *as a chastisement for their vanity*. But as I observed a strange



coldness in my prayers about my journey to Ipswich, so there fell out something next week which prevented my going thither at all."

In the course of the next month, he accomplished this journey, of which he speaks as a citizen of Boston would now speak of a tour to the Rocky Mountains. He *travelled* unto Salem, and the day after unto Ipswich, preaching in both places, and after a few days returned, rejoicing that "the Lord had smiled on his journey, and filled it with comfort and service."

In this year, 1713, he was called to endure much domestic distress. His wife was taken sick with the illness of which she died. He mentions her in the Diary, praising her for her piety, her amiable disposition, and the prudence with which she conducted his affairs. The measles came into his family and seized her and her children. On the 8th day of the ninth month he writes; "When I saw my consort very easy, and the measles appearing with favorable symptoms upon her, I flattered myself, that my fear was all over. But, this day, we are astonished at the surprising symptoms of death upon her, after an extreme want of rest by sleep for divers whole days and nights together. To part with so desirable, so agreeable a companion! a dam from such a nest of young ones too! Oh, the sad cup which my Father hath appointed me!" "God made her

willing to die. God extinguished in her the fear of death. God enabled her to commit herself to the hands of a great and good Savior ; yea, and to cast her orphans there too. I prayed with her many times, and left nothing undone that I could find myself able to do for her consolation.” “ On Monday my dear, dear, dear friend expired. Whereupon with another prayer in that melancholy chamber, I endeavored the resignation to which I am called I cried to Heaven for the grace that might be suitable to this calamitous occasion, and carried my orphans to the Lord. Oh, the prayers for my poor children ! oh ! the counsels to them, now called for ! ”

Eleven days after the death of his wife, he writes ; “ Little Martha died at ten o’clock in the morning.” “ I am again called to the sacrifice of my dear, dear Jerusha. Just before she died, she asked me to pray with her ; which I did, with a distressed, but resigning soul ; and I gave her up unto the Lord. The minute that she died, she said she would go to Jesus Christ. She had lain speechless for many hours. But in her last moments, her speech returned a little unto her. Lord ! I am oppressed ! undertake for me ! ”

## CHAPTER VI.

*Philanthropic Undertakings. — He Attempts to Christianize the Negroes. — Manner in which he employed his Time. — Habits of Industry. — First Introduction of Inoculation into America. — It is boldly and firmly sustained by Cotton Mather against a violent Opposition. — Much Praise due for the Part he acted. — Early and successful Labors of Dr. Boylston in this Cause. — Warm Controversy on the Subject.*

It is a little remarkable, that a man, so much engaged in his studies as Cotton Mather, should have been so constantly suggesting philanthropic undertakings; and while his infirmities are remembered, these bright points in his character ought in justice to be brought out in bold relief. One of the subjects, which troubled him most, was the prevailing intemperance of the day. He wrote and published much on the subject. Being himself habitually temperate, he recommended his own experience to others; and, though no general reform was produced by his exertions, he succeeded in awakening some to a sense of the danger to which the country, as well as individuals, was exposed by the alarming prevalence of the sin. He

records in his Diary ; “ About this time a nameless and unknown gentleman sent me his desire, with what was needful for defraying the expense, that a paragraph in my *Theopolis Americana*, relating to the abuse and excess of *rum*, should be printed by itself, and sent unto every part of the country.”

One of the subjects mentioned in Cotton Mather’s Diary is slavery, which, even as matter of history, is so completely forgotten in New England, that when he speaks of buying slaves, as he does more than once, he seems like an inhabitant of another country. He says, that, in the year 1706, he received a singular blessing. Some gentleman of his society, having heard accidentally that he was much in want of a good servant, had the generosity to purchase for him “ a very likely slave,” at an expense of forty or fifty pounds. He describes him as a negro of promising aspect and temper, and says, that such a present was “ a mighty smile of Heaven upon his family.” He gave him the name of Onesimus, and resolved to use his best endeavors to instruct him in useful knowledge, and all that related to the religious improvement of his soul.

One act is very honorable to his philanthropy and kindness of heart. Perceiving that the negroes, though kindly treated, had not those advantages of instruction, which were necessary to make

them familiar with the religion which he wished to have them embrace, he established a school, in which they were taught to read. And he himself bore the whole expense of it, paying the instructress for her services at the close of every week. There are many, who point out to others the way of duty and benevolent exertion; but this was better; it showed that he was willing to make sacrifices as well as to enjoin them on others; indeed, that he would sometimes impose on himself, what he would not ask others to do.

But common as this traffic then was, his attention was earnestly devoted to the subject of Christianizing this portion of our race; and the zeal, which he manifested, considering that it was not caught by sympathy, but originated in his own breast, was such as did honor to his feelings. In the beginning of June, 1706, he writes; "I did, with the help of Heaven, despatch a work, which my heart was greatly set upon, a work which may prove of everlasting benefit to many of the elect of God, a work which is calculated for the honor and interest of a glorious Christ, a work which will enrage the devil at such a rate, that I must expect he will fall upon me with a storm of more than ordinary temptations. I must immediately be buffeted in some singular manner by that revengeful adversary. I wrote as well-contrived an essay as I could, for the animating and facilitating

that work, the Christianizing of the negroes And my design is, not only to lodge one in every family in New England, that has a negro in it, but also to send numbers of them unto the Indies."

This looking for consequences to follow from every act of virtue attended him through life After every act of kindness, he waited for some sign of approbation from above, and some visitation of anger from below. Considering the variety of accidents in life, not many days could pass without something, which he could ascribe to one source or the other. And so on this occasion. A trouble, which had followed him for a long time, became, as it would seem, in consequence of this publication, severer and more fatal than ever. For, immediately after, he records; "Among the many trials and humiliations, which the Holy One has appointed for me, not the least has been the affliction of having some very wicked relations. Especially, I have two brothers-in-law, who can hardly be matched in New England for their wickedness. I have never done these creatures any harm in my life. I have essayed numberless ways to do them good; but Satan inspires them even to a degree of sensible possession. A Satanic rage against me possesses their hearts and tongues. The first of these prodigies, namely, T. O., married my lovely sister, Hannah, a most ingenious and sweet-natured and good-carriaged child, and



that would have been a wife to make any gentleman happy ; but married unto a raving brute. The fellow, whom they called her husband, perfectly murdered her by his base and abusive way of treating her ; and he chose to employ in a special manner the ebullitions of his venom against me, to worry her out of her life, who loved me dearly. At last, on the first day of the tenth month, the pangs of death came upon her ; her death was long and hard, and has awakened me more than ever to pray for an easy death. She kept, in her dying distresses, calling on me, her brother, her brother ! ”

If we may credit his own statement, these trials had no unfavorable effect upon his disposition. He was constant in his self-examination ; but he does not seem to have been fully aware, that the feelings, which are uppermost in the repose of the study, may differ from those, which are called up in the excitement of the world. Nor does he seem to have known, that feelings are little to be trusted, never to be trusted without the evidence of deeds ; and that we need that evidence, to convince ourselves, as well as others, that we possess the feelings, from which alone they can flow. There is no doubt that he believed himself what he professes to have been. That he was really as self-forgotten as he imagined, is not so sure. In the same year he writes ; “ My love to my

neighbor improves to a very sweet serenity. I take an unspeakable pleasure in all manner of beneficence. If I can see an opportunity to do good, I want no arguments to move me to it. I do it naturally, delightfully, with rapture. There is this enjoyment added unto the rest ; as I am nothing before God, so I am willing to be nothing among men. I have no fondness at all for applause and honor in the world. It is with a sort of horror, if I perceive myself applauded. I have a dread of being honored. I am got above anger at those, who think or speak meanly of me."

It may not be uninteresting to read an account of the manner, in which his days were generally spent. The reader will observe, that the expressions are his own, though it cannot easily be given in the form of quotation. He complained, that for a great part of his time he was dead. Too much of his precious time was consumed in sleep. Through his feebleness, or, as he said, his slothfulness, he sweated away the morning in rest, and did not rise till seven. As soon as he left his bed, he sang a hymn, to show forth the loving kindness of God in the morning, and then wrote down remarks on some subject, which had engaged his thoughts the night before ; after which he proceeded to add to his *Biblia Americana*. Then he offered his morning prayers in his study, in which, besides his usual supplications, he fetched

new matters of petition from what he had just been writing.

It was not till after these private devotions, that he went down to his family. With them he read a portion of the Scriptures, with remarks suggested by the words, and then joined with them in prayer; after which he retired to his study where he employed himself without permitting any interruption through the remainder of the forenoon.

At dinner, he made it his regular business to converse on some subject, from which his family could derive instruction and improvement; as soon as it was over, he returned to his study and recommenced his labors with a prayer.

His afternoons were generally spent in his study, with the exception of one, or at most two, in the week, which were devoted to pastoral visits. As soon as the evening began to fall, he assembled his family, and read to them a psalm, with remarks upon it as he read. Then they sang the psalm, and he closed with his evening family prayer.

The evening was generally spent in his study, though he sometimes indulged himself in a visit to a neighbor. At ten o'clock he came to his light supper, and spent some time in conversation with his family. He then returned to his study, and after meditating on what he had done, and

what he had neglected to do in the past day, he humbled himself on his knees before the Lord. When he retired to rest, he carried some book with him and read till he fell asleep.

The proceedings, which took place when the attempt was first made to introduce the practice of inoculating with the small-pox, afford a curious example of the resolute ignorance, with which improvement is always resisted; and they also exhibit the subject of this memoir in a very advantageous point of light; showing, that, in all cases not within the province of superstition, he had sagacity to discern the truth, and that he had moral courage to assert his convictions, at a time when he felt that he was unpopular, and that his support of the new doctrine would add to the general aversion.

It has been said, and possibly it is true, that inoculation prevailed in Wales and in the Highlands long before it was introduced into medical practice. But, however this may have been, it never was extensively known, and was at last introduced to the notice of the English by the letters of two Italian physicians, Pilarini and Simoni, who became acquainted with it in Turkey. Simoni, or Simonius, as he is learnedly called, was a Fellow of the Royal Society. In 1713, he wrote from Constantinople, that this practice had been brought into that city from the Georgians

and Circassians, about forty years before. At first, the people were cautious and afraid ; but their fears were removed by the uniform success of the experiment, and it came into general favor.

This account was fully confirmed by Pilarini, Venetian consul at Smyrna, who did not seem to have known what was written by the former. He says, that it was in use among the poorer sort of the Greeks long before it was adopted by physicians. A noble Greek, who was anxious for his children, consulted him respecting them. While they were conversing on the subject, a Greek woman, who was an *inoculatrix* by profession, came in, and such were her statements and proofs, that they determined to submit the children to the operation. They did it accordingly, and they all recovered. The news of this success spread abroad at once, and inoculation was soon established in the general favor.

It appeared from the testimony of the Negroes, that a similar practice had long been known in Africa, where the small-pox was common and fatal. Such was the weight of testimony in its favor, that, in 1717, the celebrated Lady Mary Wortley Montague, wife of the English ambassador in Constantinople, had a child inoculated there according to the custom of the country. She afterwards had another child inoculated in England, and her example produced an effect upon the

nigher orders, who followed the dictates of fashion, when they would have laughed at science and skill.

As soon as Cotton Mather saw the letters above mentioned, he was struck with the advantages of the practice, and his zeal was quickened by the alarm, which the coming of the small-pox had spread throughout the town. In May, 1721, he records in his Diary ; “ The grievous calamity of the small-pox has entered the town. The practice of conveying and suffering the small-pox by inoculation has never yet been used in America, nor indeed in any nation ; but how many lives might be saved by it, if it were practised ! I will procure a consult of physicians, and lay the matter before them.”

There are several memoranda about the same time, which show how much he was troubled. “ I have two children, that are taken with this distemper, and I am at a loss about their flying and keeping out of town. My African servant stands candidate for baptism, and is afraid how the small-pox, if it spread, may handle him.” He endeavored, as he proposed, to submit the matter to the physicians ; but he was received by them with less cordiality than might have been expected. Perhaps they considered him an intruder upon the ground of their profession.

There is something curious enough in the sort



of arguments employed by the two parties, which immediately prepared for war. The clergy, who were generally in favor of inoculation, supported it by arguments drawn from medical science ; while the physicians, who were as much united against it, opposed it with arguments which were chiefly theological, alleging that it was presumptuous in man to inflict disease on man, that being the prerogative of the Most High.

Not one of the faculty would listen to Cotton Mather, except Dr. Zabdiel Boylston, one of those strong-hearted men, who deserve to be most honorably remembered, for the services to their fellow-men rendered against their will. Cotton Mather first applied to Dr. Douglas, a physician of Scotch descent, and educated abroad, who treated the suggestion with contempt, and afterwards opposed it by all the means in his power. But, when he applied to Dr. Boylston, a man of higher order, he was at once struck with the intelligence, and welcomed it as a signal blessing to the world. In 1721, he inoculated two hundred and seventy-one patients, of whom very few died ; and being thoroughly convinced of its advantages, he continued the practice through such a storm of abuse as reformers are apt to encounter.

Through the whole, he was manfully sustained by the clergy. The Boston Association used all possible exertions to enlighten the minds of the

people ; but the people thought them wandering beyond the sphere of their professional duty, and were less likely to know the truth on the subject than the physicians. They were hardly listened to with patience on the Sabbath, and for a time, it seemed as if the existing religious institutions would be overthrown.

Cotton Mather records his indignation and sorrow in sufficiently expressive words. "The cursed clamor of a people," said he, "strangely and fixedly possessed of the devil, will probably prevent my saving the lives of my two children." He is full of distress about Sammy. The poor child begged that he might receive the disorder by inoculation, instead of being left to the hazards of the common way, and his father desired to gratify so reasonable a request ; but, on the other hand, he saw the people so possessed with fury, that he apprehended serious consequences, if he took the course which he thought the best. It must be recorded to his honor, that he acted according to his conscience, and determined to brave the consequences, whatever they might be.

Dr. Boylston was soon attacked in such a manner, as compelled him to appear in his own defence ; which he did in a spirited manner, and such as implied that he wrote, less to remove aspersions from himself, than from the new discovery, which was destined to take away the

terrors of one of the worst diseases, that afflicted the world. His "Account of what is said of inoculating or transplanting the Small Pox," was published in 1721. After describing the accounts of the Eastern physicians, which he was obliged to do at second hand, since the only person who had the book refused to lend it, he says, that it would be easy for him, if it were necessary, to answer the attacks which had been made upon him ; but he thinks, that a considerate man ought rather to decline foolish contentions. He shall therefore take not the least notice of them, hoping that his character and conduct will vindicate themselves with all reflecting men.

It is not often, that one so situated has the good sense to keep steadily to his purpose, without resenting insults and injuries, particularly when they are sustained and echoed by the public voice. In this pamphlet he says, that, considering the general excitement, he is afraid to say on what numbers he has performed the operation ; but he assures his readers, that, though he considered himself yet a learner, his success had been complete.

One of the most dispassionate reasoners on the other side, in a "Letter addressed to a Gentleman in the Country," attempted to show, that the whole question turned on two points. "First ; When God sends judgments, such as wasting dis-

tempers on men, what are the means of preservation, which men may lawfully employ? The second; Is inoculation a lawful means, and capable of affording relief?" In respect to the first, he maintains that God, for wise and unknown reasons, sends those judgments, and that men must bear them with patient submission, or resort to the only appointed means of relief, which are humiliation and prayer. We are nowhere permitted to use human means to anticipate and prevent them; and, if we make the attempt, it will only make the visitation severer when it comes.

If the originator of this choice argument was a physician, his principle, carried out, would have interfered to some extent with his practice; since, according to him, we must wait for the disease to come, in other words, to see whether the patient will die, before any means are used to restore him. But, having some consciousness of the difficulty, to which his argument would reduce him, the writer was constrained to allow, that, in ordinary cases, diseases might be resisted; but, in the case of epidemics, to maintain that they might be prevented was blasphemy, and to make the attempt was sin. With the same force the writer argues, that the success of inoculation is far from being evidence in its favor; since unjustifiable attempts often succeed and prosper in this wicked world.

In treating of the second point, the writer takes

his stand upon the strong ground of the sixth commandment. That commandment forbids our doing any thing, which has a tendency to endanger the lives of our neighbors. He says, there is no doubt that inoculation has this tendency, both to destroy the inoculated person, and those around him. This seems a little like begging the question ; but the writer takes this matter to be too clear for discussion, and declares, that, unless men are eaten up with prejudice, they must be awake to its iniquities and dangers. On the whole, he declares, that it so openly opposes the principles of the Gospel, and is so manifest a resistance to divine Providence, that every conscientious person must give it up as scandalous to religion and dangerous to the world.

One of the best publications of the time was written by Dr. Colman, minister of the Brattle-Street Church. He recommends it, without arguments drawn from theology or medicine, simply on the ground of its success ; which was evidently the thing most important to ascertain ; and, if that was once made certain, the controversy was at an end. He brings forward his own experience and observation, to show that this disorder, once so dreadful, has been tamed down, by this practice, to a harmless indisposition ; and his desire is, that no prejudice may prevent men from enjoying its benefits and blessings.

It is quite refreshing to read the remarks made by a man of sense at such times, who, instead of arguing for his own side, takes a larger view of the subject, and pleads for the interests of his race. In the close of his pamphlet Dr. Colman says, that he does not consider himself as having overstepped the line of his profession ; for to save life and give comfort becomes him and every one else. He says, that, if he has betrayed any ignorance of medical science, it is of no importance ; he shall at least be conscious, that he has written for the good of his people.

Next came "Several Arguments, proving that Inoculating the Small-pox is not contained in the Law of Physic, either Natural or Divine, and therefore Unlawful." It is a striking contrast to Dr. Colman's plain and manly statement. The writer dedicates it to the Selectmen of Boston. After acknowledging himself unequal to his undertaking, he remarks to those men of authority ; "Say not who hath written, but consider what is written, and I pray God to give you understanding." The syllogisms of this writer are irresistible. He says, "If inoculation is not contained in the rules of natural physic, it is unlawful ; the rules of natural physic are sympathy and antipathy, now inoculation is neither a sympathy nor antipathy ; therefore it is not lawful." Probably there never was a process of argument conducted with greater ease and success.



Next he considers it with respect to divinity ; saying, that if there is no rule in the word of God to found inoculation upon ; if it perverts the rights of the fatherless and the widow ; if it is doing violence to nature, it is certainly unholy. Now inoculation, says Mr. John Williams, is clearly liable to all these objections, and therefore is unholy.

In an equally summary manner, he disposes of the clergy, thinking that a minister cannot understand any thing beyond the limits of his profession ; a doctrine, which is not without acceptance in modern times, though it does not appear, by what peculiar disability a clergyman should be incapable of that, which is easy to all the rest of the world. He makes one suggestion, that must have been truly alarming. He advises people to inquire, whether, when they think they are transferring only the small-pox, they may not at the same time transfer to a healthy subject all the ailments of the individual from whom the matter is taken, such as the gout, the rheumatism, or the stone. This writer, though sufficiently disposed to be severe upon the clergy, is mild and moderate compared to another, who wrote concerning "Inoculation as practised in Boston."

The author disclaims any purpose of bringing contempt upon the clergy ; but he thinks, that the six "inoculating ministers," as he calls them,

ought to be exposed to public displeasure. He states, that the practice was introduced by Cotton Mather, who, being a man of credulity and whim, and having accidentally seen the Transactions of the Royal Society, tried to induce the physicians to make the experiment, but without success, till he found one, more bold than wise, who did as he was desired, but so rashly and unfortunately, that he was publicly exposed. Upon this he applied to his ministers to save his reputation; and thereupon they, with four more, testified to his reputation and success. Having once taken their ground, these clergymen chose rather to hazard the lives of all the community, than to retract what they had once asserted. Such is the manner in which, when controversy rages, characters are trifled with and facts distorted.

This pamphlet, which appeared without a name, and is particularly severe upon Cotton Mather, was answered in a "Friendly Debate" by Academicus, who appears to take it for granted, that Douglas was the author, from his making one of the parties to the debate a Scotchman, and alluding to Douglas in terms that could not be mistaken. The object of the "Friendly Debate" was to defend the clergy, and particularly the Mathers, from Douglas's charges; and the whole is written with a coarse freedom, which does not give a very pleasant impression.

It seems that Douglas was the person, who had in his possession the only copy of the Philosophical Transactions. So great a regard did he profess for the health of the community, that he would not lend the book even to the governor, who applied for permission to read it. He appears to have been a man of some ability, but of a temper so assuming and disputatious, that he was soon engaged in a general warfare. After doing all in his power, which was considerable, to resist the improvement, and to injure those who abetted it, he was obliged at last to subscribe to the opinions of "the bold and ignorant quack," as he courteously termed Dr. Boylston.

The result of the investigation held by the town authorities, assisted in their deliberation by the physicians, was the publication of certain resolutions, which were produced with great solemnity on the 21st of July, 1721. They say, that it appears by numerous instances, that inoculation has proved the death of many persons, soon after the operation, and has brought distempers on many others, which were fatal to them at last ; also, that "the natural tendency of infusing such malignant filth into the mass of blood is to corrupt and putrefy it," and, if there is not a sufficient discharge of that malignity, it lays the foundation of many dangerous diseases ; also, that the operation tends to spread and continue the disease in a place longer

than it might otherwise be. The conclusion of the whole matter was, that, "to continue the operation was likely to prove of the most dangerous consequence."

At the same time this venerable body came out with a statement concerning the small-pox, as it had prevailed up to that time from May to July, in which they would persuade the public, that notwithstanding the terror and mortality, which it had occasioned, it was in fact a light visitation. But even the authority of the fathers of the town gave way before the force of truth. Their counsels could not induce people to die without an effort to preserve themselves, when a chance of escape was opened. But, while many of those who were in danger resorted to the proposed relief, the general voice cried out against it. It was the prevailing wish, that a law should be passed for the special benefit of Dr. Boylston, providing, that every physician, on whose hands an inoculated patient might die, should be condemned and executed for murder.

While this tempest was raging, Cotton Mather persevered in his spirited and manly course, without yielding in the least to the abuse and menaces that were showered upon him. One is tempted to wonder, that he was not overcome with that assertion of his opponents, which ascribed inoculation to the powers of darkness, a point on which

his fears were so easily excited. But his good sense seemed to have been uppermost from the beginning, and, being firmly persuaded of the correctness of his course, he never for a moment altered.

One example is enough to show how far the age of his adversaries was carried. His nephew, Mr. Walter, the clergyman of Roxbury, was inoculated in his house. The operation was privately performed, but the circumstance was known to a few, and information was soon given to those, who were active against inoculation. The same night, at day-break, a hand-grenade was thrown into the window of the chamber where Dr. Mather generally slept, which was then occupied by Mr. Walter. Fortunately, as it passed through the window, the fusee was beaten off, and the meditated destruction prevented. A paper was found attached to it, which contained coarse abuse of Cotton Mather, and a threatening to inoculate him in such a manner, that he would not soon recover. The author of this attempt was never detected.

So great was the popular excitement, that the General Court were required by the public opinion to take up the subject, and devise some way to protect the community from those innovators, who so wantonly trifle with human lives. A bill was prepared, making it a crime to inoculate for

the small-pox within the bounds of Massachusetts, and was carried through the House without much opposition. The Council, however, were not so directly influenced by popular feeling, and they certainly took the most effectual way to put the matter at rest. Instead of contending with the common prejudice, they passed silently over it, and the result was, that nothing more was ever heard of the bill. It was fortunate, that the statute-book was not defiled with this provision, which could only have served to show how communities often stand in their own light, and resist the means which Providence has appointed for their good.

If any one considers the extreme difficulty of forming a judgment in opposition to universal prejudice, and the courage it requires to avow it, when the avowal exposes one to injury and danger, he will not withhold from Cotton Mather the praise due to his sagacity, good sense, and fortitude, on this occasion. It was the more difficult to maintain his ground, because the matter seemed to belong to the jurisdiction of another profession, the members of which, with one exception, were united against him.

It must not be said, that he had great authority abroad to which he could appeal ; for the fact was, that Lady Mary Wortley Montague did not inoculate her child in England, till the same month in which Cotton Mather did the same in Boston



This is a case in which his merit was great and unquestionable. Dr. Boylston also deserves to be honored for his moral courage. In fact he was honored abroad, though reviled in his own country. When he visited England, where his character and services were well known, he received great attention. Among other proofs of consideration he was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society, and was thus compensated by foreign liberality for the abuse, which he received from his brethren at home. The best reward, which they received, was the sight of their own success. Prejudice gradually subsided, and men honored those, who had resisted the general delusion.

It appears from the best accounts, that the number of those, who had the small-pox in 1721, was five thousand five hundred and eighty-nine. Of these, two hundred and forty-seven were inoculated. The deaths among the inoculated were in the proportion of one to forty-two, while among those, who received the disease by contagion, the deaths were one to seven. Such facts could not be resisted for ever, and in some later visitations of the disease, the town became, as it was said, "inoculation-mad." The admission of fresh air to the patients was another innovation of that time, which saved many from the grave.

## CHAPTER VII.

*Case of Self-delusion. — Harvard College. — Curious Record from the Diary of Cotton Mather describing the State of his own Mind. — His last Sickness and Death. — Remarks on his Character and Writings.*

ONE of the most remarkable instances of self-delusion recorded in personal history, is found in Cotton Mather's description of his feelings, when the office of President of Harvard College became vacant by the death of President Leverett, who had filled the office with usefulness and honor for many years. He writes in his Diary, May 7th, 1724; "The sudden death of the unhappy man, who sustained the office of President of the College, will open a door for my being of singular service to the best of interests. Indeed, his being within a year of the same age with myself loudly calls upon me to live in daily expectation of my own call from hence. I do not know that the care of the College will now be cast upon me, though I am told it is what is most generally wished for. If it should, I shall be in abundance of distress about it; but if it should not, I may do many things for the good of the College more quietly and more hopefully than formerly."

Notwithstanding this apprehension of distress, his thoughts, it seems, were often turned toward this subject. "Why may I not write unto the tutors of the College, and solicit for such things as these; viz. that, under a deep sense of their great opportunities to do inexpressible good unto the College, and more than all, to the country, and what both God and man expect from them, they would come unto a combination," &c. After this he seems to grow less confident, as to the prospect of his election as successor to Judge Leverett; for, on the 1st of July, he writes; "This day being our insipid, ill-contrived anniversary, which we call the Commencement, I chose to spend it at home, in supplications, partly on the behalf of the College, that it may not be foolishly thrown away, but that God may bestow such a president upon it, as may prove a rich blessing unto it and unto all our churches."

He ascribed his loss of this appointment, on the former vacancy, to the enmity of Governor Dudley; and now he seems to believe, that his enemies are at work to excite prejudices against him. The true reason he never suspected; which was, that the public had no confidence in his judgment, while they admired his literary ability; and they determined wisely, that such a defect in his personal character entirely disqualified him for the station.

In order to keep his name before the public, in connexion with the office to which he believed himself entitled, he addressed the convention upon the subject of the College, and its bearing on the interests of religion, endeavoring to impress upon them, as he says, that "a well-principled governor of that society would be of mighty consequence to all." But his exhortations did not produce the effect desired. With the exception of a few of his admirers, the people generally felt the necessity of looking elsewhere for a president, and Dr. Sewall was accordingly chosen. The effect is thus recorded in the Diary.

"I am informed that yesterday, the six men, who call themselves the Corporation of the College met, and, contrary to the epidemical expectation of the country, chose a modest young man, Sewall, of whose piety (and little else) every one gives a laudable character."

"I always foretold these two things of the Corporation; first, that, if it were possible for them to steer clear of me, they will do so. Secondly, that, if it were possible for them to act foolishly, they will do so. The perpetual envy, with which my essays to serve the kingdom of God are treated among them, and the dread that Satan has of my beating up his quarters at the College, led me into the former sentiment; the marvellous indiscretion, with which the affairs of the College are managed, led me into the latter."

But while he betrays this vexation at the loss of an appointment, which he considered his own by right, and withheld from him only from the impulse of personal dislike, he endeavors to persuade himself, that he had no desire of the station, except for the advantage which it would give him for doing extensive good. And before he is censured as hypocritical, it must be remembered, that very possibly he may have dreaded the labor of the office, while he wished for the honor of the election; and, in the midst of his disappointment at losing the one, he may, at the age of sixty-two, have felt relieved at escaping the burden of the other. He writes; "It proves accordingly now, through the senseless management of these men themselves, little short of a dissolution of the College; yet I have personally unspeakable cause to admire the compassion of Heaven to me, on this occasion. Though I have been a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, yet none of the least exercises that I have had withal was the dread of what the generality of sober men expected I desired, the care of the College to be committed unto me. I had a dismal apprehension of the distresses, which a call at Cambridge would bring upon me."

He had at this time domestic distresses, which were enough to weigh him down; and they probably were the chief cause of that severity of

feeling, which grew upon him in later years. His third wife, to whom he often alludes in his Diary, generally writing those passages in Latin, was a woman either diseased in mind, or most unfortunate in her temper. From the terms he employs in describing her conduct, it cannot be easily determined whether he considered her insane or responsible for her actions. Sometimes she was very affectionate and devoted to him; then, without any visible cause, she would break forth into explosions of passion, which destroyed all the peace of his life. Without entering much into this subject, one passage from his Diary will be sufficient to show what kind of trouble it brought upon him. In 1724, he writes; "My dear, dear Nancy, a child of so many afflictions all her days! The unreasonable and implacable aversion of her mother-in-law, augmented no doubt by the wicked kinswoman of my wife, who sojourns with me, and otherwise adds to her uneasiness, and compels me to seek some other place where I may board her. I must contrive all the ways imaginable to comfort the child, and to make her sorrows profitable to her."

But the most oppressive of all his domestic sorrows was the conduct of his son Increase, a young man of uncommon ability, but unfortunately led away by bad associates, so far as to be a burden to his friends. In 1721, he writes in his Diary, "My



miserable son ! I must cast him and chase him out of my sight, forbid him to see me, until there appear some marks of repentance upon him." Again ; " Now, now, I have a dreadful opportunity to try how far I may find a glorious Christ, a comforter that shall relieve my soul. What shall I find in store to comfort me under the horrible distresses, which the conduct of my wicked son Increase has brought upon me ? " Again ; " I must write a tremendous letter to my wicked son ; and, after I have set his conduct in order before his eyes, I will tell him that I will never own him, or do for him, or look on him, till the characters of repentance are very conspicuous in him. God prosper it ! ' Though I am but a dog, yet cast out the devil that has possession of that child ! "

This young man was lost from on board a vessel at sea. He seems to have been regarded with anxious affection by his father, and there is reason to believe, that his early promise was such as to justify ambitious hopes. But the notices of his conduct and character in the Diary grow more and more discouraging, till the last trace of him that we find recorded, is in the affecting words, which have no other explanation than that which they carry with them. " My son Increase ! my son ! my son ! "

The Diary of Cotton Mather for the year 1724, when he was sixty-two years of age, gives the im-

pression that his mind was diseased almost to the verge of insanity. Whether it was that his disappointed ambition had made him look on every thing in its most unfavorable light, or whether he had really met with more ingratitude than usual, cannot now be ascertained ; but it seems certain, that he was in that state of mind in which he could not see things as they are ; a state of mind, which, if permanent, becomes insanity.

He entitles this record, "Dark dispensations, but light arising in darkness." The dispensations, as he describes them, are dark enough ; what light there was among them, as they presented themselves to his mind, it is not easy to discover. He gives fourteen instances to show how his attempts to do good in the world had been requited ; apparently without the remotest suspicion, that some part of the fault may have been his own.

In the first place, he mentions his exertions in behalf of seamen ; he really desired to do good to that class of men, in the same way as philanthropists have labored in modern times to serve them. But he had no aptness in recommending himself to them. Traditional respect for his office was not enough to secure a hearing from them ; and he found, that he himself could not accomplish the good, which it was evident might easily be done. He says, that the recompense of his efforts has

been, that "there is not a man in the world, so reviled, so slandered, so cursed among sailors."

A second of these dispensations has followed his efforts in behalf of the negroes. At a time when they were hardly thought of as subjects of sympathy and compassion, and when the idea of making them Christians would have been deemed a vision, he appeared as their advocate, pleading for their instruction, comfort, and salvation. And yet, he says, many, on purpose to affront him, affix his name, Cotton Mather, to the young negroes, so that if any mischief is done by them, the credit of it comes upon him.

The third instance of this retribution appears in the result of his services to the female sex. No man had done so much to elevate them in the respect of the community, or to hold up the lives of excellent and distinguished women, as an example to others. "Yet," says he, "where is the man, whom the female sex have spit more of their venom at? I have cause to question whether there are twice ten in the town, who have not, at some time or other, spoken basely of me."

In the fourth place, he has labored to be a blessing to all connected with him. He has even kept a catalogue of his relations, and never suffered a week to pass without some act of kindness to each one. Yet, so far from enjoying the comfort in their society, to which he was well entitled, there was

not a man on earth, who had been tormented with "such monstrous relatives"; with the exception, perhaps of Job, who said, "I am a brother to dragons."

In the fifth place, the conduct of the Scotch toward him has been singularly ungrateful. He has labored unceasingly to vindicate the reputation and honor of the Scotch nation; yet no Englishman was ever so much reviled and libelled by Scotchmen as he. In this, probably, he refers to the treatment, which he had received from Douglas, who had just before poured out upon him the effervescence of a temper, never very sweet, and at the time particularly excited by the subject of inoculation.

The sixth example is found in the result of his efforts to do good to the country. He has labored incessantly to secure its best interests, both by public and private exertions, and has filled it with publications tending to promote its happiness and virtue; and yet, he says, there is no man, in any part of the country, who is so loaded with disrespect, calumny, and all manner of expressions of aversion.

The seventh is found in his efforts to uphold and strengthen the government, and to maintain it, when it was shaken, in the reverence and affection of the people. And yet nothing could excel the discountenance, which he had always received

from the government. No man, of whatever station, had ever received from a government so many injuries, indecencies, and indignities as he.

The eighth, and probably the most bitter of these dispensations, was that connected with the College, an institution which, he says, he has done much to serve and adorn, so that it might be known as the intellectual birth-place of "such as are somewhat known in the world, and have read and wrote as much as many have done in other places." And yet the College has always treated him with every possible mark of disesteem. If he were the greatest blemish that ever came upon it, or the greatest blockhead that ever came out from it, its managers could not treat him with more contempt than they do.

In the ninth place, he speaks of his general efforts to raise the standard of conversation. He has never gone into company for nearly fifty years without direct contrivance to say something, which should make those who heard it either wiser or better. And nevertheless, his company is as little sought for, and there are as few resort to him, as to any minister in all his acquaintance.

The tenth example is that of good offices, which he has invariably made it a point to do whenever and wherever an opportunity could be found. Such opportunities he has ever welcomed with alacrity, when they offered themselves, and

has sought for when he found them not. He has even offered pecuniary rewards to those, who would give him information where his services could be applied. And yet he cannot see a man living, for whom others are so unwilling to do good offices, as for him. He cannot say, that he is entirely destitute of friends, but he has *how few!* He has often said to himself, "What would I give, if I could find any one, who is willing to do for me, what I am willing to do for all the world!"

In the eleventh place, he has served the cause of literature and religion, by constant exertions in writing books of piety, and such as might advance the interests of the Redeemer's kingdom. Their number exceeds three hundred. And yet, he has had more books written against him, more pamphlets to traduce, reproach, and belie him, than any man that he knows in all the world.

The twelfth of these dispensations relates to the variety of services, which he had been enabled to perform. For lustres of years, not a single day has passed without constant effort on his part, to be serviceable to his friends, his country, and to men. And yet, he adds, "My sufferings! Everybody points at me and speaks of me, as by far the most afflicted minister in all New England." And many look upon him as the greatest sinner, because he is the greatest sufferer, and are pretty



arbitrary in conjecturing what sins he is suffering for.

From these dispensations, it would seem that he was suffering not so much from the infliction of Heaven, nor from the coldness and contempt of men; but rather from a depression, which had been gathering upon him for many years. Some of these dispensations, arising from his domestic trials, are not so proper for the public eye; but the truth is, that he had anxieties and trials, which were enough to irritate the best temper in the world.

When it is remembered, that, in addition to this, he saw various prizes, which he considered his own, passing away to other hands, and found that he could never inherit the political influence, the literary honors, nor even the general confidence, which his father enjoyed, it is not surprising, that he should have felt as if his services were underestimated, and rewards withheld from him for personal reasons, which would have been readily given to any other man.

There is in his Diary the air and manner of one, who is conscious of having done much that is wrong; but nothing can be inferred from this to his disadvantage. Boswell, finding such intimations in Johnson's Diary, supposed, from the depth of his self-abasement, that he must have been guilty of some great crimes. But in his case, and

probably in that of Cotton Mather, such language was only an exaggerated expression of the remorse, which they felt for that waste of life, and that indifference to the purposes of existence, of which so many are guilty, but for which few men have a conscience faithful enough to upbraid them.

Nothing is known of the closing years of Cotton Mather, till he was seized in December, 1727, with the disease of which he died. His son in accordance with the principle on which his "Life" is written, to withhold all such information as might interest the reader, does not say what the disorder was. But, whatever it may have been, Dr. Mather had a strong conviction, that he should not recover. In writing a note to his physician, he made use of these words; "My last enemy is come; I would say, my best friend."

He died on the 13th of February, 1728, when he had just completed his sixty-fifth year. In the interval, while he was gradually drawing near to the grave, he exerted himself to make useful and lasting impressions on those around him. One of his church asked him if he was desirous to die. He replied, "I dare not say that I am, nor yet that I am not; I would be entirely resigned unto God." When the physicians believed it their duty to tell him, that he could not recover, he lifted up his hands, and said, "Thy will be done on earth, as it is in Heaven." A few hours before

his death, he said, "Now I have nothing more to do here; my will is entirely swallowed up in the will of God." When it came to the last, he said, "Is this dying? Is this all? Is this all that I feared, when I prayed against a hard death? O! I can bear this! I can bear it! I can bear it!" When his wife wiped his disordered eye, he said, "I am going where all tears will be wiped from my eyes."

Indeed, the whole of his closing scene was calm and collected. "He died as every man should die." His self-delusion, and all the peculiar infirmities of his character, seemed to leave him as he drew near the grave. To his nephew, after urging him to be earnest, zealous, and unwearied in doing good, he said, "My dear son, I do, with all possible affection, recommend you to the blessing of our Lord Jesus Christ. Take my hands and my heart full of blessings." He had passages read to him, from his book called *Restitutus*, saying that they exactly expressed his feelings. One of them was this. "It shall come to pass, that at evening time it shall be light. O, the light, which a glorious Christ, present with us, will give us in the evening, when we apprehend ourselves in all the darkness which we should else have to terrify us, when the curtains of the death-bed are drawn about us. The light of a soul passing into the inheritance of the saints in light! The light

of an open and abundant entrance into the paradise of God ! ”

He was followed to the grave by an immense procession, including all the high officers of the province. It was the general sentiment, that a great man had fallen. Though some had been at enmity with him, and many had disliked him, over his grave they seemed with one consent to regard him as a man of great powers and sincere piety ; who, though sometimes misled by prejudice and passion, had endeavored to do good.

Several of the funeral sermons preached on that occasion were published ; and, as some of them were not formal exercises, but unsolicited expressions of the feelings of the writers, they are not probably exaggerated in their praise. Dr. Colman particularly, a man of deliberation, in the Thursday Lecture after his death, described him as “ the first minister in the town ; the first in age, in gifts, in grace ; the first in all the provinces of New England for universal literature and extensive services.” Mr. Prince, of the Old South Church, gave the same testimony to the public loss, beginning his allusion to the departed, by saying, “ The infirmities of the fathers should be reverently covered.”

The general impression of his character was faithfully expressed in the language of his colleague, Mr. Gee ; “ The capacity of his mind, the

readiness of his wit, the vastness of his reading, the strength of his memory, the variety and treasures of his learning, in printed works, and in manuscript, which contained a much greater share, the splendor of virtue, which, through the abundant grace of God, shone out in the tenor of a most entertaining and profitable conversation; his uncommon activity, his unwearied application, his extensive zeal, and numberless projects of doing good; these things, as they were united in him, proclaimed him to be a truly extraordinary person." It is true, that funeral eulogies are not the best sources in general, from which to derive information with respect to character; but, in this case, there is no reason to distrust them; and, considering the relation in which the subject of this memoir stood to many of his contemporaries, he was more likely to have full justice done to him after his death, than while living.

Cotton Mather was not a man of original genius, though his mind was active and strong. He was inclined to read rather than to think; and it was by familiarity with the works of others, and the trains of thought which they awakened, that he was able to send out so many works of his own. Dr. Chauncy testifies of him, that he was the greatest redeemer of time he ever knew; that there were hardly any books in existence, with which Cotton Mather was not acquainted. As this was

his passion, to devour all the literature of ancient and present times, it led him into habits of thought and writing, in which it is not easy to judge what his native talent, if differently cultivated, might have been.

The writings of Cotton Mather afford striking remarks, and passages of occasional eloquence; but they are not sustained. Such was the irregular habit of association, which prevailed in his mind, that some illustrations, from the vasty heaps of his learning, were perpetually starting up, and diverting his attention from the subject. Sometimes these illustrations were appropriate and happy; sometimes they seemed to be introduced only to display his attainments. They remind the reader constantly of the works of Jeremy Taylor, not so much by their richness, though in this they are not deficient, as by this oddness of illustration, which makes us wonder by what sort of intellectual process they could have connected it with the subject in hand. In both cases, we are surprised at the capacity of a memory, which could retain so much that was recommended, not by its usefulness, not by its value, but simply by the circumstance that it was little known to other men.

Whatever may be thought of Cotton Mather's natural ability, which was certainly great, no one can help admiring his industry and application; qualities hardly to be expected in a man of quick



parts, who was ready, brilliant, and entertaining in conversation ; and who, as his company was in universal request, might easily have been tempted to content himself with the display of that power. The spirit, which induced him to pass so much time in his study, and to set up over the door an intimation to his visitors in the words, "Be short," was honorable to him, since it appears to have been the result of a sense of duty.

It is impossible to give any account, within these limits, of his printed works, which amounted to three hundred and eighty-two. The great proportion are light tracts, such as occasional sermons ; many of them are pamphlets on subjects which happened to interest the public at the moment ; and which, having answered their purpose, would have been forgotten, but for the name of the writer. One of the best of his large works is his *Christian Philosopher*, a popular work on natural theology, in which he assembles the information, which naturalists had given, and presents it in such a manner as to afford a strong impression of divine goodness and power.

Another is a version of the Psalms, in which he made it his object "to give in metre an exact and literal translation of the Hebrew text, without any jingle of words at the end." His son extols the plan of this work, mentioning among its other advantages, that he was not tempted to select improper words for the sake of a rhyme.

His greatest undertaking was a work to be called *Illustrations of the Sacred Scriptures*. He commenced it in his thirty-first year, and labored daily upon it, till, twenty years after, it was sufficiently advanced to send out proposals for its publication. From that time to his death he was continually adding to it. This prodigious manuscript is deposited in the Library of the Massachusetts Historical Society, where it remains a monument of the matchless industry of the writer. The sort of learning, which he brings to bear upon the subject, is better calculated to show the extent of his own attainments, than to illustrate the meaning of the sacred writers, exposition not being a work in which he was qualified to excel.

It is very difficult to form a satisfactory estimate of a character like Cotton Mather's, which abounds in contradictions ; to tell the precise amount of blame due to his faults, which were many, and how heavily they should weigh against the credit due to his virtues. It is impossible to hold him up as an illustrious example of excellence ; but, while the testimony of his friends cannot be safely received, there is danger, lest, in our disgust at his fanaticism and occasional folly, we should deny him the credit which he actually deserves. There are some points in his conduct, which are open to severe reproach ; but, taken in connexion with other points, it seems easier to

account for them in some other way, than to ascribe them to a calculating and unscrupulous ambition, which was ready to sacrifice every principle to self-aggrandizement and love of applause.

It has been remarked already, that his course on the subject of witchcraft was the most discreditable part of his history. His agency in it cannot be doubted, nor can it be explained by saying that he sincerely believed in the existence of the crime. But the thing, which exposes him to the charge of hypocrisy, is, that after the frenzy was over, he endeavored to persuade others, that, so far from encouraging the proceedings, he had labored to recommend forbearance and caution, when it is so plain, that his influence and exertions were one of the chief causes of their being carried to such excess.

This, however, seems more like a case of self-delusion. It is not uncommon for men, when they are compelled to see their conduct in a new light, to persuade themselves, and with success, that they never felt as their actions seemed to imply. And, with his remarkable powers of self-blindness, it was easy for him to convince himself, that he was always in favor of deliberation. Those cautions, which, when he wrote them, were simply formal, afterwards appeared to him like his real convictions at the time. At any rate it seems more consistent with what we know of him, to

believe that he deceived himself than that he should attempt and hope, while his opinions were on record, to deceive the world.

It is not a little singular, that one so excitable, and withal so firm and zealous in his religious opinions, should not have been as forward to persecute heretics as witches; and yet he was more liberal on this subject, than his father, and indeed than most men of his age. Not that he was able to comprehend the principle and duty of toleration, as it is now understood; not that he could tread in the footprints of William Penn. But, comparing him with those about him, he was distinguished by his religious liberality. This is one of the inconsistencies referred to; that he should have raised his voice against inflicting penalties on men for religious errors, while he thought, that the dealers with the powers of darkness deserved to die. For fanaticism generally enters on one pursuit as warmly as on the other. But he shows a generous exultation in the absence of such a spirit from his own community. In one of his sermons, he says; "In this capital city of Boston, there are ten assemblies of Christians of different persuasions, who live so lovingly and peaceably together, doing all the offices of friendship for one another in so neighborly a manner, as may give a sensible rebuke to all the bigots of uniformity; and show them how consistent a variety of rites in

religion may be with the tranquillity of human society ; and may demonstrate to the world, that persecution for conscientious dissent in religion is an abomination of desolation ; a thing whereof all wise and just men will say, ‘ Cursed be its anger.’ ”

With respect to the disposition and temper of Cotton Mather, we know nothing except what we learn from his son. He assures us, and there is no reason to doubt his testimony, that in his family, he was systematical, but by no means severe. On the contrary, he employed gentleness and persuasion in dealing with his children, far more than was common in that day. We learn, that his conversation in social life was remarkably agreeable, and his company sought for on account of his cheerful and entertaining powers.

It is certain, that he was strongly disliked by many, and believed by them to be unscrupulous, restless, and intriguing. Whether this was only the aversion, which is always provoked by a man of his temperament in some of those whom he deals with, or whether there was just reason for their charges, it is not easy to determine with the small means of information, which we now possess. In the latter part of his life, his expressions in his Diary indicate a settled jealousy and distrust of others, owing doubtless to his disappointments, and the mortification, which he naturally felt, to

see that all the winds, which in early life had filled his sails, had completely died away.

His expressions in controversy are bitter enough ; but we find language quite as strong in the writings of his father, who never was accused of malignity. The friends of his reputation cannot say, that his sentiments were elevated or habitually generous ; nor can its enemies, who are still many, bring more proofs of bad feelings and passions, than can be found in the lives of most ardent and active men.

Cotton Mather died but little more than a century ago. No name in our history is more familiar to readers of every description. He was the kind of man, whose peculiarities were most likely to be remembered ; and yet the amount of information, which can be gained concerning him, is exceedingly small, as this memoir will show. The writer has made all possible exertion, and gone to every source where information may be looked for ; but, with the exception of his Diary, the remnants of which are scattered in various hands, and a few occasional references to him in the history of the times, nothing is known of the personal history of Cotton Mather. His works are of a kind, which were attractive and interesting in their day, but now sleep in repose, where even the antiquary seldom disturbs them. He will be remem-



bered, however, as the author of the *MAGNALIA*, a work, which, with all its faults, will always find interested readers ; as a man, too, of unexampled industry, and unrivalled attainments in curious rather than useful learning.















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